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3rd Edition

# Drawing

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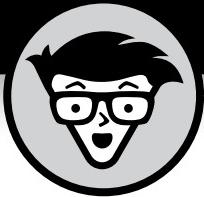
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**Jamie Platt**

Artist and drawing enthusiast: It all  
started with crayons.





# Drawing

3rd Edition

by Jamie Platt

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Drawing For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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# Introduction

Welcome to *Drawing For Dummies*, Third Edition, a book that focuses on the basics of drawing for beginning artists but also includes plenty of challenges for more experienced artists.

Throughout this book, I show you a manageable approach to drawing that works.

## About This Book

Within this book, you discover everything you need to know to get started with drawing, including what supplies, techniques, and processes you need to use to create different types of drawings. The most valuable parts of this book are the numerous exercises and projects I include for you to try, so be sure to keep your drawing supplies handy while you read! Along the way to each exercise and project, you find ideas, tips, and strategies that will help you finish it.

I cover a variety of subjects that all aim to reinforce the notion that good drawing comes from good seeing and to help you develop your drawing skills in a fun and efficient way. You don't have to read it cover to cover.

The hundreds of illustrations you find in this book are meant to illuminate and inspire, not to be exact models for you to copy. Don't worry if your drawings look different. The point is to master the concepts, not to adopt a particular drawing style.

This book is here to help you understand key ideas about drawing and master important techniques and skills that artists throughout time have discovered again and again. All you need is an open, curious mind and a little patience and persistence.

# Conventions Used in This Book

I've established the following conventions to make it easier for you to navigate this book:

- » New terms are in *italics*, and I define them for you.
- » **Bold** text highlights key words in bulleted lists and action parts in numbered lists.
- » Monofont sets off web addresses.
- » Before each project or exercise, you find a list of recommended supplies. If you don't have exactly those supplies, don't worry; you can do all the projects in this book with whatever supplies you do have. The results may be a little different, but not having the "right" supplies shouldn't be a barrier to drawing.

# Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I've made some assumptions about you:

- » You've drawn a little and you'd really like to find out how to do it well.
- » You may be afraid that drawing well depends on obvious natural ability.
- » You may think drawing well means being able to draw realistically from your imagination.
- » You may think drawing is only good if you create a good product.

I've used these assumptions to help explain a versatile way of looking at drawing. My philosophy of drawing is that you can learn to be excellent at drawing no matter where you're starting from.

# How This Book Is Organized

This book begins by helping you feel comfortable with drawing. You'll discover the basics, from buying supplies to holding a pencil and from line drawing to shading. The rest of the book is loaded with various drawing topics; feel free to skip around.

To make the content more accessible, I divided it into four parts:

- » Part 1, "Discovering What It Takes to Draw," includes what you need to know to start drawing, from a list of drawing supplies to different ways to find inspiration, to a summary of the steps you go through to make a drawing.
- » Part 2, "Developing Basic Skills," includes strategies you can use to create drawings with good proportions and a sense of depth.
- » Part 3, "Experimenting with Subject Matter," teaches you about four categories of drawing subjects: still life, landscape, animals, and people.
- » Part 4, "The Part of Tens," includes a buffet of tips to help make the drawing process a little easier, as well as ideas for drawing cartoons.

## Icons Used in This Book

In the margins of almost every page of this book, you find icons, which are there to alert you to different types of information. Here's what they mean:



TIP

This icon saves you time and energy by showing you a helpful method for doing something.



REMEMBER

This icon points out important information you need to know as you develop your drawing skills.



WARNING

This icon points out potential problems and positive solutions.



TECHNICAL STUFF

Feel free to skip over (and come back to) the highly technical information marked by this icon.



SKETCHBOOK

When you see this icon, dig out your drawing materials and open your sketchbook. It's time to draw!

# Beyond the Book

In addition to the book content, you can find valuable free material online. We provide you with a Cheat Sheet that serves as a quick checklist, including the basic supplies you need to draw, where to find inspiration, how to identify common drawing styles, and more. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet by searching [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) for **Drawing for Dummies Cheat Sheet**.

## Where to Go from Here

You don't have to go through this book in sequence. You can poke through the table of contents and jump right into the topics that excite you. To make sure you don't miss out on something important while you're skipping around the book, I provide lots of references to pertinent material so you know where to go to find what you need. How you approach this book will likely depend on your level of experience:

- » If you're a beginner to drawing, you may prefer to start at the beginning with Part 1 and work your way through each chapter in sequence. When you finish that part, we recommend that you read over all the information and work through each project and exercise in Part 2 before you move on.
- » After you have the basics under your belt, you can randomly wander through the rest of this book and read and enjoy whichever chapters and sections you prefer.
- » If you can already draw well, feel free to pop around this book any way you want. Take a quick flip through the pages, notice which illustrations catch your eye, and start reading wherever you feel inspired. Read some sections, draw a little, read a little while longer, and then do more drawings.

# 1 **Discovering What It Takes to Draw**

### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Discovering what it takes to learn to draw.

Learning what it means to see like an artist and how to translate your inner vision into art.

Gathering what you need to start drawing, from basic approaches to drawing to selecting and materials and from finding time to draw to finding inspiration in others and yourself.

Learning about and exploring the five developmental stages of drawing.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Taking the plunge to see if you have what it takes to start drawing
- » Discovering what drawing is
- » Finding the motivation, supplies, and style you need to keep drawing
- » Developing drawing habits that'll get you through the rough patches

## Chapter 1

# Gearing Up to Start (and Continue) Drawing

**D**rawing is primal. I bet you've been drawing since before you could talk. It is common to all and deeply personal at once. Whether you choose to draw a tree or just a looping spiral, by putting marks on paper, you connect the inner workings of your mind to the world outside it.

So, are you ready to take a serious step toward sharpening your drawing skills? Well, you've come to the right place! This chapter is an introduction to drawing as a subject of study. Along with a quick summary of the materials and skills you need to get started, you find useful information about historical and contemporary approaches to drawing. In case you want to know more about any of the topics I touch briefly on here, I've peppered this chapter with references to other chapters where you can find in-depth coverage. As a bonus, I've included some information right at the beginning about how to tell whether drawing is for you. (Spoiler alert: Drawing is for you!)

# Testing the Waters: Do You Have What It Takes to Draw?

For many burgeoning artists who have a nagging, tickling idea that they may have what it takes to draw, testing out the dream feels like a real risk. After all, if they fail, the dream will be gone — just like that. If you’re afraid to risk losing your dream of becoming an artist, I hear you and am here to say you can stop worrying. Go ahead and take the risk; you may be surprised to discover that it isn’t really a risk after all for one simple reason: Anyone who wants to learn to draw can do it.

## Debunking the talent myth

Every elementary school has at least one kid who can draw an amazing unicorn (or some other detailed animal or object) without looking at any books or photos for inspiration. All the teachers and students look at that kid and say, “That kid’s got real talent.” Maybe you were that kid in your school. Or maybe you only wished you could draw like that kid. Either way, you can learn to draw well today as long as you’re ready to put your mind (and pencil) to work.



REMEMBER

What’s called *talent* in drawing is actually a heightened sensitivity to visual facts. (Lucky for you, this is something anyone can develop!) To draw well, you must be able to see the physical facts of things, such as size, shape, value, texture, and color and to make comparisons. Familiar objects are often hard to draw because, when you look things you know well, your brain doesn’t take time to carefully analyze the way they look. To see things as they actually are, you need to practice looking deeply. When you’re really tuned in to the facts of what something looks like, that particular something becomes much easier to draw. (See Chapters 2 and 6 for some great tips on how to increase your visual sensitivity.)

Talent on its own doesn’t make an artist. Yes, the ability to see like an artist and make visual comparisons is a necessary condition for drawing well, but they don’t matter at all if you don’t also have a passion for drawing. Even if you feel like you have no artistic talent whatsoever, if you have a desire to draw in your bones, you can master the other stuff with determination and practice. After all, the bulk of getting better at drawing is practice — not talent. No matter how talented you are, you won’t grow as an artist if you don’t practice. Passion is what gives you the motivation and courage to do that work.

## Embracing your individuality

A great way to learn how to draw is to lean into learning about your idols and trying to make work like theirs. Copying is a great way to practice and develop your drawing skills. Just know that you can't claim any copied work as your own. (Check out Chapters 3, 5, and 15 for details on how to develop as an artist by using other artists' works as inspiration, and refer to Chapter 16 for more details on copyright.)

Eventually, you will want to let go of your influences so you can develop who you are as an artist, but you'll probably always see some of your idols' influence in your work. Even the most well-known and accomplished artists are influenced by the work of others. For example, you can see traces of Cezanne in Picasso, but Picasso was still unarguably unique.



REMEMBER

Even as you copy the works and styles of your idols, don't forget to embrace your individuality as an artist. Don't try to purge the things about your drawings that make you unique. Your idols had time to discover who they are as artists; now it's your turn! The things that make you different are important clues about who you are as an artist.

## Defining Drawing

Essentially, drawing is the act of applying marks to a surface. A drawing is usually made up of lines and tones on paper, but it hasn't always been that way and it isn't always that way today (see the following sections for more details).



REMEMBER

However you define drawing, it's important to keep in mind that drawing is a verb; it's an action that you do. No matter what tools you use to draw, the act of drawing is the same: You move your hand/arm/whole body while holding a mark-making tool and leave traces of your movement on your drawing surface.

## Looking back at the first drawings

The earliest known drawings are the ancient pictures of animals and figures made with natural pigments on the rocky walls of caves, as shown in Figure 1-1.

These drawings predate written history and are some of the oldest records of what human life was like as many as 30,000 years ago. The Egyptians used drawings to create the pictograms that later became one of the first systems of writing (called *hieroglyphics*). See Figure 1-2.



**FIGURE 1-1:**  
Ancient cow  
drawing from  
Lascaux caves  
in France.

Adobe Stock Images



**FIGURE 1-2:**  
Ancient Egyptian  
hieroglyphics.

Adobe Stock Images

For hundreds of years, drawing has been a functional craft as well as an artistic practice. People have long used drawing to communicate, tell stories, plan paintings, design architecture, and a whole lot more. The resulting drawings have become beautiful artifacts of the human experience over time.

## Surveying current drawing trends

Take a look around. Drawing is everywhere and it takes many forms. As with any other art form, drawing reflects the life and times of the culture. Art critics and historians are people whose job it is to take the pulse of the art of a particular place and time. It's easier in some ways to do this when you're looking at the art of the past. Just as it might seem like a safe choice to focus on trying to draw like Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci — artists whose greatness has already been sanctioned by the art world — it's exciting to look at the art that's being made now too. Doing so gives you a lens for learning something about what it means to be a person in your time. It just might be even better to see yourself and the way you draw as part of the fabric of your time, too. It's a risk to go your own way but if you stay open and receptive to riding the waves of the present, who knows what wonderful places you'll get to go in your work?

Anais Nin said, “Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.” (Check out Chapter 2 for details on how to see the world as an artist and Part 3 for lots of info on the different subject matter you can draw.)

## Examining the Motivation behind Drawing

The desire to draw comes with being human. Children are voracious drawers, and although most people draw less often after childhood, they still encounter drawing occasionally when they're doodling in the margins of a notepad during a long lecture or plotting out their gardens for the year. You know instinctively how to connect your hand and brain to make marks on a drawing surface. Add a little motivation to that instinct, and you have everything you need to be great at drawing. So where do you find this motivation? The following sections show you some different ways you can use drawing and a few important benefits you can get from it.

## Finding uses for drawing

As you probably already know, the act of drawing is great for planning things out, but you can also use it to create portraits, landscapes, cartoons, and still life drawings. No matter what you choose to create through drawing, it's important to remember that drawing doesn't have to be a super-serious process that leads to a product worthy of the history books. Something about the act of drawing just feels good — even if the product you make is whimsical, temporary, or just plain silly.



TIP

If you ever feel overwhelmed by the seriousness of your drawing endeavors, give yourself a break and make some playful drawings. The following is a list of alternative, playful uses for drawing, just in case you need some inspiration:

- » Use decorator icing to draw portraits of your friends or co-workers on cakes or cookies. (Keep in mind that realism isn't as important as creativity!)
- » Use thread to draw on your pillowcases. (Yes, I'm talking about embroidery here.)
- » Draw with your non-dominant hand. If you're left-handed, see what happens to your drawings if you put your pencil in your right hand. If you're right-handed, try using your left hand.
- » Draw with your feet. (Warning: This can get a little messy! Put a large sheet of paper on the floor. Dust your feet with powdered charcoal and walk around on the paper to make marks. See if you can make a somewhat realistic drawing using your feet. Check out Chapters 10 through 13 for ideas about making realistic drawings of various subjects.)
- » Try a blind contour drawing. Blind contour drawing is where you draw the contour of an object without looking at your paper. Choose an object to draw. Decide where you want it to go on your paper. If the object is taller than it is wide, set your paper up vertically. If the object is wider than it is tall, a horizontal orientation makes sense. Next, decide on a place to start on the edge of your object. Touch your pencil down on the paper in a corresponding spot (bottom-left side of object/bottom-left side of paper, etc.).

Before you start drawing, remember you won't be looking at your paper at all so it will be helpful to keep your pencil in contact with the paper the entire time. Okay, your pencil is on the paper, look at the object. Just stare at the spot where you want to start. Imagine that your pencil is actually on the object. Very slowly begin to move your eye around the contour of the object and, while doing so, move your pencil on the paper, tracing the movement of your eye with the pencil. Try to forget about the paper and pretend your pencil is tracing the object. A good way to visualize this is to imagine moving the cursor on your computer by moving your finger on the trackpad or manipulating your mouse.

- » Draw in the sand or snow.
- » Arrange rocks or plants to form lines in your garden, creating a different kind of drawing.

## Considering the benefits of drawing

Drawing is satisfying on so many levels: mentally, physiologically, emotionally, and socially. After all, when you draw, your mind reaches through your hand to make direct contact with the world. When you draw from observation, you have the opportunity to physically re-create what you see. It's like you're touching the subject with your pencil and exploring all its subtleties. No matter how your drawing turns out, when you draw something, you feel like you know it better when you're done than you did before you drew it.

Drawing helps you think and process thoughts. Your imagination can be quite fluid and fragmentary, moving from one partially formed idea to another and back again in rapid succession. Drawing out your ideas gives them tangible form and some level of permanence. Even if the form isn't exactly what you were thinking about, having a drawing to work with gives you something you can hold on to and manipulate.



REMEMBER

Drawing is a whole-body experience. Your hand is the most obvious player, but pay attention the next time you draw. Notice the way your arms and shoulders move when you draw and the way your spine supports and responds to the movement. When you stand at an easel to draw, you find yourself falling into a dance-like rhythm — drawing, stepping back to check your drawing, stepping forward again to draw some more, and so on. If you sit when drawing, you still develop a physical rhythm. Regardless of where you draw, the process of drawing is a workout — which explains why you sometimes feel exhausted at the end of a drawing session. I can't say drawing is a substitute for a jog around the park, but you'll certainly feel like you've done something after you draw!

Emotionally speaking, drawing is somewhat of a mixed bag. But even though a frustrating drawing will sometimes leave you feeling upset if not outright distraught, the emotional benefits you get from drawing far outweigh the costs. Consider the following:

- » The physiological benefits of drawing are part of the emotional benefits. Moving around to draw and tensing and releasing your muscles is exercise and, according to research, exercise can elevate your mood.
- » Learning to draw boosts your overall confidence. As your drawing skills improve, your confidence grows, and greater confidence makes the tougher drawing days easier to manage.

- » The feeling you get from making a mark in response to something you see and knowing that the mark is just right makes all the work you put into your drawings worth it. If you catch it just right, even the curve of a vase can be one of the most exhilarating things you've ever seen!
- » Because drawing is a solitary activity, it may seem like an unlikely source of social benefits. However, because drawing is a solitary activity that generates questions and excitement, you'll likely be itching to talk to people about your drawings as you create and finish them. Enthusiasm is contagious!



TIP

Many communities have sketch groups that meet regularly to draw and share ideas. To find one near you, try typing *art group* along with the name of your city and state into your favorite search engine.

## Outfitting Yourself for the Job

If you've ever found yourself standing in front of a 4-foot-high shelf filled with 17 different kinds of erasers and even more types of pencils, you know choosing art supplies can be a daunting task. To make it a little more manageable, I suggest that you make a list before you go to the store so you at least know what to look for when you get there. (Check out Chapter 3 for some helpful and specific information about drawing supplies, including a breakdown of the different grades of pencils you can get and some examples of what they can do.)



REMEMBER

When you're first starting out, try to buy your supplies at an art supply store. If you don't have one nearby, you can find art supply stores online. Don't let access to an art supply store or limited funds keep you from drawing. You can pick up a few tools from the office supply aisle at your local grocery store. If you can go to an art supply store or shop at one online, it can be helpful to have expert advice about what supplies to get and what those supplies can do. Chapter 3 includes advice to help you get started outfitting your drawing studio.

You'll notice that I don't list specific brands in Chapter 3 or anywhere else in this book. The truth is the brand of your tool isn't nearly as important as the way the tool works. Plus, too many brands offer good supplies to point out only one or two. If you can try out a tool or supply in the store before you buy it, do so. Chances are, though, when you're new to buying art supplies, you may not know what a "good" pencil is supposed to feel like. The best way to find out is trial and error. Buy a couple of different pencils and try them out at home to see which ones you like the best. Whenever you can, add a new supply to your drawing toolbox, and, in no time, you'll know which tools work best for you and your drawing style.



TIP

If you can't test out your tools before you buy them and you don't have any preferences yet, shop by price. In most cases, you get what you pay for. You can expect higher-quality supplies to cost a little more, but if you're hoping to get some good-quality supplies without breaking the bank, shoot for the middle range of prices. The cheapest supplies may not give you an idea of what they can really do, so try not to buy all value supplies. Colored pencils, for example, vary tremendously in quality. The extravagantly priced supplies probably aren't necessary when you're getting started, but if you fall in love with a marble-handled mechanical pencil, add it to your wish list.



REMEMBER

Drawing has something for everyone. When choosing supplies, balance the quality you want with what you can afford. If your budget is tight, don't feel like you have to spend a lot of money to make drawings. A simple No. 2 pencil and any paper can produce a beautiful drawing. If you don't have any money to spend on your drawing, use whatever resources you have available. I've seen beautiful drawings that were made using coffee!

## Discovering Your Artistic Style

In drawing, *style* refers to a set of identifying characteristics found in a particular artist's work. You don't have to worry about finding a style for your work because style is something that happens on its own. Unless you put your foot down and refuse to be yourself, your drawings will take on some signature characteristics that become the seeds of your personal style.

Style comes from who you are. Your drawings will be unique in large part because of things you don't control, like the kind of pressure you automatically exert on a tool, the natural rhythms you fall into as you draw, and the natural tendencies you have to make certain types of marks. Your influences play a part in your style, too. You can't help but pick up a few little things from the artists you admire.



REMEMBER

Guard your individuality! It's tempting to adopt the style of an artist you admire as though you're joining an exclusive club. However, if you really want to grow as an artist, you need to allow your own artistic voice to shine through your work.

As long as you're constantly developing as an artist, your work will continue to change and your style will continue to evolve. Know that some aspects of your work will remain the same, though. Embrace the parts of your style that change and those that stay the same, because they both have a hand in defining the artist you are.

## **SEEING THE ARTISTIC VALUE IN CONTEMPORARY SCRIBBLES**

Have you ever been in an art museum or gallery and heard someone say, “My kid could do that painting”? You know exactly what the person’s talking about — the seemingly random scribbles and blobs of paint that have been proclaimed “extraordinary art” by critics and artists alike. How have these less traditional artworks earned the label extraordinary? To find the answer to this question, you need to take a little trip through art history.

Before photography came about, the purpose of art was pretty clear: Record reality as it happens. Although artists and methods changed over the years, the overall concept of art continued on the path to greater realism until the late 19th century when photography was born. Photographs represented life and reality so well that painting and drawing suffered a major identity crisis — why have artists who paint and draw when you can have photographers?

Artists began to ask questions about the meaning of things like art and beauty, and they began to create art that went far beyond what the naked eye could see. Artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso twisted and flattened the human form into something just barely recognizable. Jackson Pollock dripped paint all over the place. Their seemingly strange work led to artistic experiments in thinking, and eventually, to the contemporary artistic expression you see at exhibitions today.

## **Practicing Sustainable Drawing Habits**

Drawing is a rich and stimulating process. The benefits listed earlier in the section “Considering the benefits of drawing” are only a handful of the reasons why you may get hooked on drawing. Still, you’re likely to experience your fair share of times when drawing feels scary and hard and you doubt your abilities. Don’t give up! These moments will pass. In this section, I share some tips for how to prop yourself up when the going gets rough.

### **Acquiring essential skills**

Whatever kind of drawing you want to do, it’ll be much easier to do if you know the basics about how perception works and how you can draw what you perceive on paper. Chapters 5 through 9 are designed to offer you a solid grounding in the basic skills you need to develop to make realistic drawings. Chapter 5 shows you

how to take a drawing from the planning stages to completion, and Chapters 6 through 9 deal specifically with creating a realistic illusion of space. After you acquire these basic skills, you'll have the tools you need to draw anything.

## Implementing an effective order of operations

If you've ever spent a long time on one part of a drawing only to realize you made whatever it is you were drawing too big to fit among the other elements you still have to add to your drawing to make it complete, you know how frustrating the drawing process can be. Lucky for you, you can avoid this frustration with a little bit of planning.



REMEMBER

The most efficient way to approach a drawing is to begin with the most general aspects and work gradually toward the more specific ones, holding back on the fine details until the very end. For example, if you're drawing an apple, start by drawing its size and shape; then draw the stem and any surface details.

Start each drawing by mapping out the size, basic shape, and placement of all the objects you want to include in that drawing so you'll have enough room for everything in your drawing space. For instance, if you know you want to include a house and a tall tree in a drawing, first determine where the tall tree will go and how much space it will take up. If you know the tall tree will fit vertically, you'll know the shorter house will fit in the drawing, too. To see how this order of operations works in practice, check out the instructions to any exercise or project in this book; I've created all of them using this order of operations. Also turn to Chapter 5 for details about the drawing process.

Following the order of operations saves you time and frustration throughout the drawing process. If everything in your drawing is loose and general in the beginning, you can make major changes throughout your process without feeling like you're losing a lot of your hard work. After you map out where all the things in your drawing go and how big they are, you can confidently focus on developing the details that make the objects unique without having to worry that you may need to move them or change their sizes.



TIP

The hardest thing about working from the general to the specific is waiting to get to the fun parts of your drawings (you know, the details that make everything look real). Do your best to hold off on the fun until after you map out the general layout of the drawing. You'll be glad you did when you see the finished product!

## **Adapting to ambiguity**

Part of what makes drawing compelling is its unpredictability. Somehow, the fact that you can't control it makes you want to try. When you're just getting started with drawing, uncertainties may feel like failings on your part. They're not! Try to be patient with yourself. Focus on seeing like an artist, and keep telling yourself that you have what it takes to work through the murky parts of drawing. The more you practice, the more confident you'll become, so keep reading and start drawing!

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Learning to look at the world with an artist's eye
- » Recognizing the potential in your surroundings
- » Doodling your way into drawing
- » Looking inward to access your imagination

## Chapter 2

# A New Kind of Seeing: Getting Familiar with the Artist's Perspective

**E**xperiencing the world from the point of view of an artist is like looking through a special lens. Your focus shifts. You become more attuned to the aspects of things that ignite your creativity.

When it comes to drawing, that artistic perspective is helpful in a few ways. If you are interested in drawing and looking at the world like an artist, you'll notice things that pique your desire to draw. When you have the desire to draw something you have seen in real life or imagined in your mind, you'll use the artistic perspective to focus on the aspects of a thing that help you draw it. When you're working on a drawing, you'll rely on your artist's perspective to make decisions about what your drawing needs.

In this chapter, you learn about what it means to look at the world like an artist and why it's beneficial. Finally, you'll get opportunities to practice tapping into your own artistic point of view.

# Exploring the World as an Artist

Have you ever pulled out your drawing supplies and set up to draw only to realize you have no idea what you want to draw? Searching for the right subject is a tale as old as time. It's easy to get caught up in the belief that you need to choose a subject that is smart enough, novel enough, difficult enough, beautiful enough, and so on. This line of thinking is a one-way road to paralysis town. What if you could find a way around all of that? Spoiler Alert: You can! When you look at the world through the eyes of an artist, the world becomes your personal all-you-can-draw buffet. And the best place to find your next subject is, well, anywhere. Take a look at the following ideas to learn more about using your artist's eye to explore the world.

## Paying attention with an artist's eye

When you look at the world with an artist's eye, everything takes on a new dimension. For a person like you who draws, looking at the world like an artist means paying attention to the aspects of things that make you want to draw them. It also means becoming more sensitive to the physicality of things because you're getting used to looking at things in a way that is helpful for drawing. You may look at things you've been looking at all your life and suddenly realize how complex they really are. A house plant, for example, looks different when you look at it with an eye that wants to draw it. Your artist's eye will immediately notice the shape and quantity of the leaves, and the way the leaves interact. They're so complicated you might wonder how anyone could ever draw one. Part of having an artist's eye is getting excited about the challenge of drawing something complicated so you'll immediately begin to imagine a strategy for drawing it.

## Noticing the abstract qualities of real things

One of the most important things that happens when you learn to look at the world as an artist is that you begin to notice the abstract qualities of real things. Abstract qualities are the aspects that are possible to draw: line, shape, value, size, color, and texture. A tomato has roundness as an abstract quality. If you're not sure you can draw a tomato, but you think you can draw something round, you can draw a tomato. You have to start by noticing (and drawing) its round shape. Then once you have that down, you can look back at the tomato and ask yourself what else you see. Pay attention to any other shapes you see. What shape is the stem (if you can see it)? What about the shapes of any leaves? And where are they? How big? If you can look at the tomato, or anything else, and see its abstract qualities, then you are thinking and seeing like an artist.



TIP

To get some practice looking for abstract qualities, make a list. Grab a pencil, some paper, and a nearby object. Try focusing on your object's abstract qualities: line, shape, value, size, color, and texture. What is it like? Make a list including each quality and any associations you make. For example, a tomato has a round shape. Be as specific as you can. In the case of the tomato, maybe it is round and a little squashed on one side. Perhaps it feels heavy or reminds you of a water balloon. If you can't think of an answer, skip it. Maybe it will come to you later. You can make this kind of list any time you have a free moment. You don't even have to write it down.

## Finding fun drawing subjects right in front of you

Sometimes the best drawing subjects are the ones closest to you. Look around now and linger on anything that catches your eye. Think about its abstract qualities (line, shape, value, size, color, and texture). Imagine how you might draw it. Anything that grabs your attention is a worthy subject.

You are surrounded everyday by things you probably never look at closely. For example, take a close look at the faucet on your kitchen or bathroom sink. Try to draw it. You might be surprised by how it really looks when you take the time to focus on it.

Pay attention to the things that are important to you. The creatures, objects, and places you engage with day to day are part of what you are uniquely qualified to make drawings about.

Figure 2-1 shows a drawing made from an in-progress 1,000-piece puzzle. A puzzle makes an interesting drawing subject for many reasons. In this case, the artist's love for puzzles adds a layer of personal biography to the drawing.



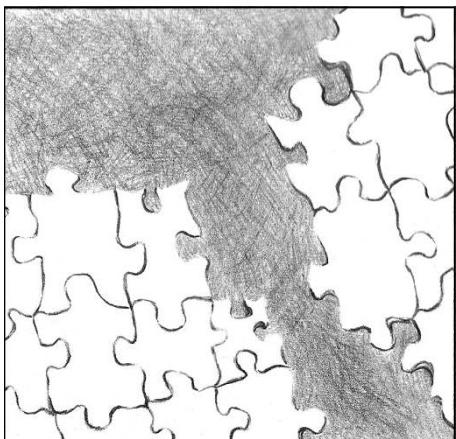
TIP

When you want to draw something from your life, spend some time thinking about your feelings about the object and what you want people to know about it. In the case of the puzzle, the art in Figure 2-1, the artist was interested in the way the concavities and convexities of the shapes fit together to make a whole.

## Seeing your home from a whole new perspective

In his book, "Poetics of Space," French poet Gaston Bachelard talked about home as "the topography of our intimate being." If our homes are a map of our internal worlds, imagine what you be able to learn about yourself or to express to the world by making drawings of the place you live.

**FIGURE 2-1:**  
Your life is full of  
drawing  
possibilities.



*Jamie Combs*

Looking at your home this way is another way of looking at the world with the eye of an artist. This way of seeing with the eye of an artist involves both your physical eyes that take in information and your mind's eye — which makes meaning from what you see.

Why not try making a drawing of a room in your house and find out what you see? All you need is something to draw with and something to draw on. Don't worry about getting it down perfectly. You will learn a lot about anything you try to draw just by trying to draw it. If you get into it and realize you want some tips about how to draw more skillfully, there are lots of chapters in this book that will help you. Chapter 3 is full of information about drawing materials. Chapter 6 has several ideas for getting a drawing going. Chapter 7 is helpful for learning how to deal with drawing in 3D.



TIP

If looking at a whole room is too overwhelming, find a smaller section that intrigues you. You can use the viewfinder frame I show you how to make in Chapter 5 to narrow your drawing scope to something more manageable.

Figure 2-2 shows a partial view from one artist's studio desk. The focus of attention was the contrast between the crowded space and the empty windows. By drawing the scene from this point of view, the artist found something interesting in an ordinary space.

## From the fridge to your drawing paper

Food has always been a favorite drawing subject for artists because it's symbolic of many positive aspects of life, such as abundance, comfort, memory, and life-style. The meaning your food-inspired drawings have depends on the type of food you choose to draw. For example, if you make a drawing of corn dogs, the meaning

of the drawing comes, in part, from the different associations your viewers make with corn dogs. From fruit to vegetables and bread to fish, an eclectic menu of drawing subjects awaits your drawing appetite. All you have to do is decide what looks the most appetizing to you.

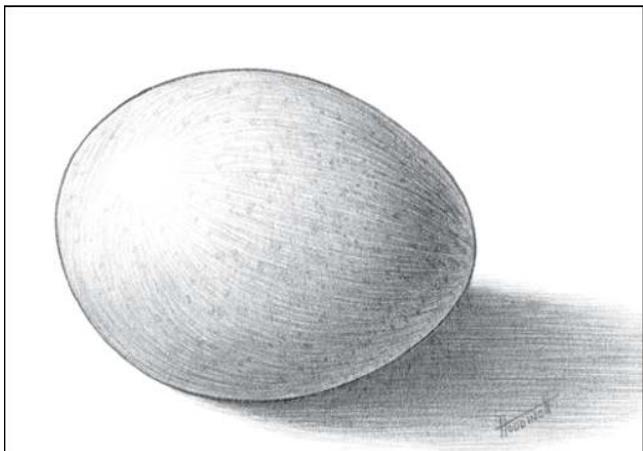


**FIGURE 2-2:**  
Seeing interesting  
drawing subjects  
in your home.

© Brenda Hoddinott

Check out your cupboards, fridge, and other places for food-related items to use as drawing subjects. Figure 2-3 shows a classic example of an egg, but any kind of food is worth trying. Plus, you can always eat your subject after you finish drawing it! I don't know about you, but I think cupcakes make a great subject.

**FIGURE 2-3:**  
Finding a fun  
drawing subject  
in a simple egg.



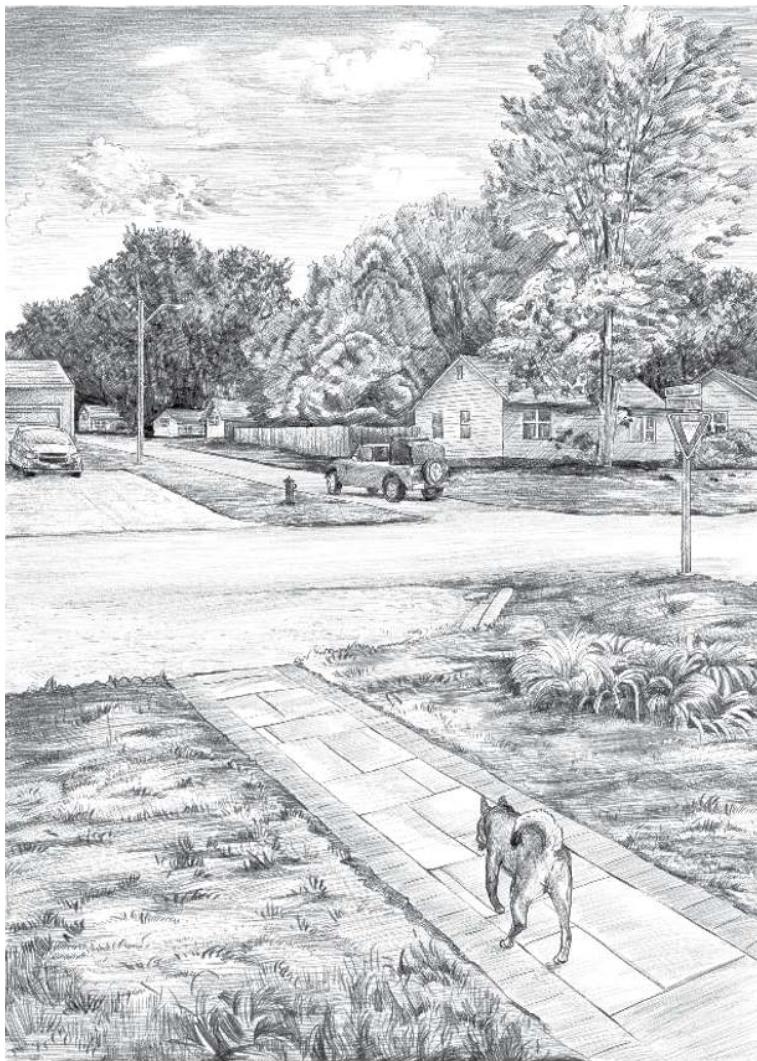
© Brenda Hoddinott

## Surveying your neighborhood and beyond

No matter where you live, the landscape that surrounds you is full of aesthetic potential. A suburban street lined with electrical wires may not seem as romantic and awesome as a canyon dotted with Joshua trees, but then again, depending on what you choose to focus on in your drawing, it may turn out to be just as beautiful after all.

Take a moment to appreciate your neighborhood and the landscape that surrounds your home from the eyes of an artist. Notice the way a flower struggles to grow from a crack in the sidewalk. See how a simple park bench becomes a make-shift office for someone working through lunch on a sunny afternoon. Look at the striking contrast when sunlight illuminates buildings in front of a dark and cloudy sky. Capture some of these images in the pages of your sketchbook. Just be prepared to explain to your neighbors why you're staring at their house!

Figure 2-4 shows you one artist's perspective on their neighborhood. Strips of pavement interlock with strips of grass to create a grid-like structure, binding discrete homes into a community where separation and togetherness coexist rhythmically. The inclusion of signs of life in the form of the cat and the car driving up the street indicate the artist's expression of what it feels like to be in their neighborhood . . . . Whatever your home is like, take some time to appreciate its drawing potential and then grab your pencils and sketchbook and start drawing!



**FIGURE 2-4:**  
Taking advantage  
of the artistic  
possibilities  
in your  
neighborhood.

© Brenda Hoddinott

## Discovering Your Inner Eye as an Artist

Your *inner eye* (sometimes called your *mind's eye*) offers infinite views of the world that are both imagined and remembered. To see what I mean, close your eyes and visualize a blue sky with white, fluffy clouds. Now try to visualize the face of someone you know well. As you do so, your memory and imagination work together to create worlds similar to the one you inhabit but marked by your personal impressions. Those same impressions make it into your drawings whether

you draw from imagination or from what you see in front of you. The results are often imperfect in some ways, but that's totally fine. Capturing the spirit of the idea is what matters.

Even when your eyes are open, your memory and imagination are active participants in creating your perception of the world. Because your subjective experiences frame what you see, your impressions of your surroundings are different from the impressions of everyone else. The following sections explain how your inner eye plays with the facts of what you see. You find out how to use doodling to tap into the workings of your own inner eye and how to use what you discover about your inner eye to grow as an artist.

Perception is a complicated act. So much so that two people having a shared experience can come away with conflicting stories about that experience. When you look at the world, what you notice has a lot to do with what is meaningful to you. For example, if you love mushrooms, a basket of mushrooms on a shelf where you shop will grab your attention. If you don't care for mushrooms, you might pass that basket and not even register that you've seen it. Now, if you really hate mushrooms, you'll be more inclined to notice those mushrooms, too.



REMEMBER

Your inner eye is like a filter. It changes the way your eyes take in information. Whenever you look at anything, you simultaneously perceive facts and impressions. If you've ever looked at a tangle of lines in a doodle you made and realized it reminded you of something, you've experienced your inner eye at work.

## Doodling with doodles

Although the act of doodling has gotten a bad reputation over the years (as a way to waste time during boring meetings or classes, for example), it's actually a great exercise for artists. It is a quick way to activate your imagination.

Early in the 20th century, the *Surrealists* introduced a new way of drawing which, while not doodling exactly, was doodling adjacent. Called *automatic drawing*, this technique involved making drawings automatically, moving their drawing hand with no preconceived intent. The idea was that this technique would produce drawings that came straight from the artist's psyche. To see some examples, just type "Surrealist Automatic Drawing" into a search engine.

Doodling isn't the same as automatic drawing but the two practices have something important in common. Doodling frequently begins with no real plan. Sometimes, you might find yourself doodling without even realizing that you started. A lot of the doodling that adults do looks like a time filler. On the other hand, sometimes a doodle suggests something else and before you know it, you're adding eyeballs to what was just a tangle of lines.

Doodling is a fun and easy way to jumpstart your imagination for those times when you really want to draw but you need inspiration.



REMEMBER

One of the cool things about your inner eye is that it's always working. When you see something that reminds you of something else, that's your inner eye making meaning out of what your eyes see. You have the ability to imagine things that seem like they could happen even if they never could; your mind's eye helps you bring those imaginings out into the world. To see how a simple doodle can lead to all sorts of imagery, check out the doodle in Figure 2-5.

The artist of Figure 2-5 made this doodle in one continuous line. She started with no preconceived idea except that she would cover the entire rectangle with doodling. She changed the way she was moving the pencil (spiral, languid, angular) whenever it occurred to her to make a change. Try turning this book around in all four directions and looking at the doodle from each different point of view. You may see a couple of familiar things in the doodle as you give your imagination free reign.

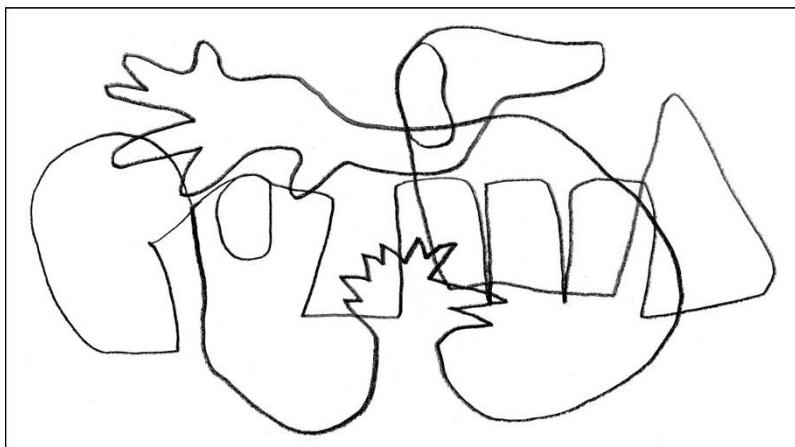


FIGURE 2-5:  
A doodle.

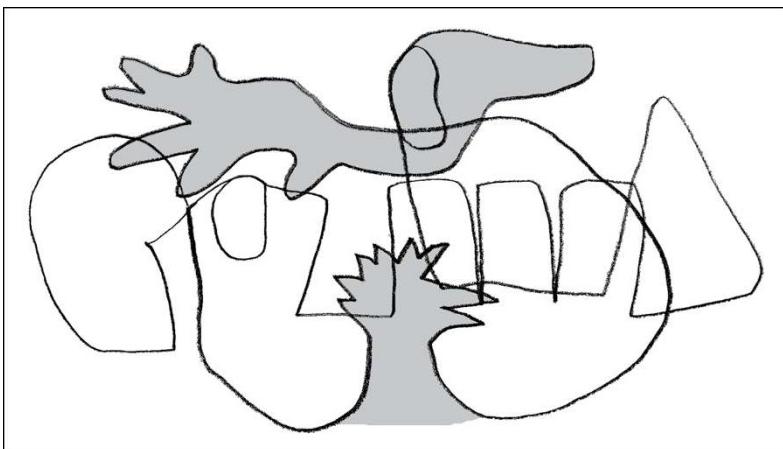
*Barbara Frake*

## Finding inspiration in your doodles

Figure 2-6 shows some of the shapes, objects, and other images that you may see in the doodle in Figure 2-5. How many of them did you see? Try turning the book around in different directions to find more images.

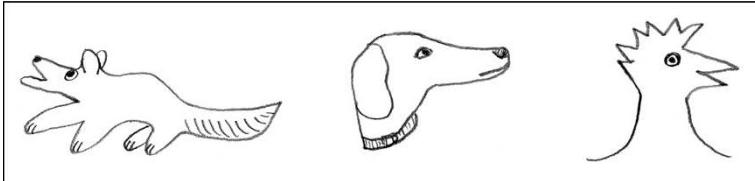
Check out Figure 2-7 to see what happens to the images from Figure 2-6 when they become line drawings.

**FIGURE 2-6:**  
Finding shapes in  
your doodles.



Barbara Frake

**FIGURE 2-7:**  
Turning simple  
doodle shapes  
into line  
drawings.



Barbara Frake

## Project: A Doodle of Your Own



SKETCHBOOK

Each time you draw, your artistic visual skills improve. This project, which is divided into three parts (each with its own set of instructions), helps you give your imagination a workout through doodling. You have no illustrations to guide you, so grab your markers, pencils, and sketchbook and get ready to have some fun!

### Putting down the lines

This part of the project works best if you start without any preconceived ideas, so don't think about what you're going to draw. Just jump in by following these steps:

1. **Pick a place on your paper to begin.**
2. **Make a small dot.**

This dot is where you begin your doodle and also where you'll end it.

3. With a fine-tip marker or a pencil, draw a doodle in one single line that covers the whole paper and ends at the dot you drew in Step 2.



TIP

As you draw, include straight, angled, and curved lines as the mood strikes. Let your doodle cross over other lines in lots of places, and change the direction of your lines frequently.

If you accidentally break the line, don't worry. Just pick back up where you left off. A little extra doodling certainly doesn't hurt!

## Seeing beyond the lines

After you draw your doodle, clear your mind by taking a short break. Then sit comfortably in your chair with your doodle drawing in front of you. Notice that your drawing paper has four sides; as you turn your paper around in each direction, each side becomes a bottom. Follow these steps to see the possibilities in your doodle:

1. Turn your paper so the first side is the bottom; relax your mind and observe the doodle from this perspective.

Find something that reminds you of a face or an object. If you find something, use your marker or pencil to retrace the lines that make up the image you see. At this point, you're simply calling attention to whatever it is you see, so don't worry about creating a complete image.



TIP

Don't be disappointed if you don't see anything at all for the first few minutes. Take another little break; then come back and have a fresh look. Try closing your eyes for a few seconds and then opening them again. You can even let your eyes go "out of focus" for a few seconds and then bring them back into focus. Sometimes things you see normally when you aren't trying to see them are nearly impossible to see when you're trying to force yourself to see them.

2. Turn your paper so the next side is the bottom and see what you can find by following Step 1 for that side.
3. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 for the remaining sides of the paper.



TIP

Don't worry if some shapes overlap others as you turn the paper to each side. The more images you see, the better! If the images get too confusing, try blackening some or all of the shapes with a marker or 6B pencil.

## Creating drawings from doodles

How many shapes and objects did you find in your doodle? Choose your favorites and add more lines and details to turn them into drawings. Don't worry about turning out masterpieces! Simply use your imagination and have fun with these doodle-inspired drawings.

## Bending reality with your mind

Throughout this chapter I've been talking about the important role of your inner eye — your mind's eye — in the way you take in visual information. Your inner eye shapes what you pay attention to and how you feel about it.

Another way your inner eye works as an artist is to imagine things you've never seen before. Have you ever looked at a drawing you made and had the feeling that it didn't quite look like the picture you had of it in your mind? The ability to picture things in your mind enables you to visualize something you'd like to draw, even if it you don't have it in front of you or it only exists in your memory.

Since you can imagine things you've never seen before, you have the power to make drawings that express your inner reality. You can embellish, combine, and invent to your heart's content. Cartoonists, graphic novelists, and illustrators do this all the time. They purposely make choices in their drawings to make their meaning clear.



TIP

Lynda Barry is an American cartoonist who has written lots of books about how to tell stories with drawings. If you search for her work online, you'll see that she can make a character look worried, amused, awkward, and on and on. She does it by paying attention to what emotions look like when someone feels them. Barry's characters come straight out of her imagination. They are believable because she creates manages to create "personness" in her drawings without referencing an actual person. She exaggerates the features of bodies and faces to get her point across. You can do this, too and you don't have to be a cartoonist, graphic novelist, or illustrator to think this way.

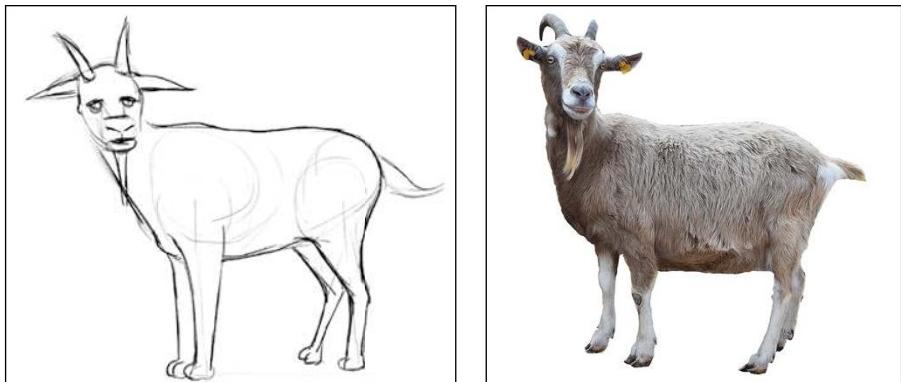
If you want to make a drawing and you have an idea in your mind about what you want it to look like, you don't have to wait to find a real life subject to get started. Your drawing definitely doesn't have to be realistic to be good. It's fun to learn how to draw things realistically and there is a ton of information in this book to help you do that. If drawing realistically isn't what you want right now (or ever), don't wait! You can get started drawing right now!

Here are some ideas to get you started:

**1. Don't worry about real-world rules when you're drawing things you see with your mind's eye.**

When you draw from your imagination, you are building a world with its own rules. If you try to draw something the way you think it would look if you were in front of it, you miss out on what's fun about not knowing exactly what something looks like: finding out what it looks like to your mind's eye. To test this, try drawing a giraffe right now without looking one up on the Internet. You don't have to show anyone. When you get done, go ahead and look one up to see the difference. Your drawing will show you what your mind's eye remembers about a giraffe. Your mind's eye is where what's personal about your vision really shines. Check out Figure 2-8 for an artist's example of this exercise done with a goat.

**FIGURE 2-8:**  
Side-by-side  
images of a  
drawing made  
purely using the  
mind's eye from  
the memory of a  
goat and a photo  
of a goat for  
comparison.

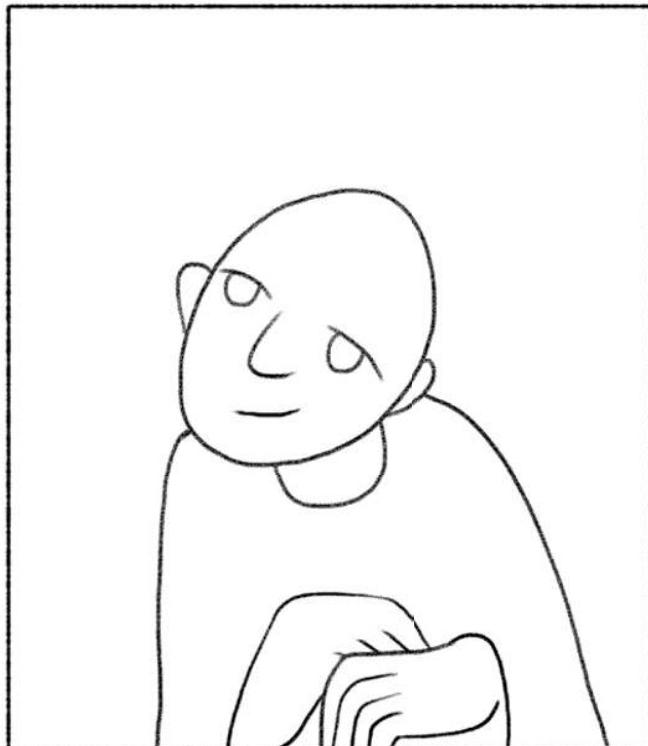


*Jamie Platt*

**2. Simplify, simplify, simplify.**

When you're working from your imagination or memory, drawing the spirit of the thing is what counts. Keep your shapes simple. If you're drawing someone you know from memory, resist the temptation to try to get granular with the details of their anatomy. Instead, think about things that would help you recognize them if you saw them across the street: posture, hair style, glasses . . . Draw those. If you're drawing a nature scene, think about how to divide the space. How much sky will you need, how much land? What are the major features of the scene? Will there be trees, water, a bridge? What are the basic shapes of the trees? Use line to mark the location of the major features like the line between the Earth and trees or trees and sky. Add features like buildings, trees, and paths in a descriptive but simple way. See Figure 2-9 for an example of a simplified person drawn from imagination.

**FIGURE 2-9:**  
Invented figures  
can be very  
simple and still  
have believably  
human character.



*Jamie Platt*

**3. But also, feel free to make it complicated.**

Sometimes details add to a story. Specific hairstyles, items of clothing, or types of furniture can help you create characters and settings for your drawing. Pattern or the lack of it can be a great way to convey the energy and personality of what you're drawing. Figure 2-10 demonstrates what happens when you add some identifying features, like a hairstyle and a patterned outfit, to the Figure from 2-9.

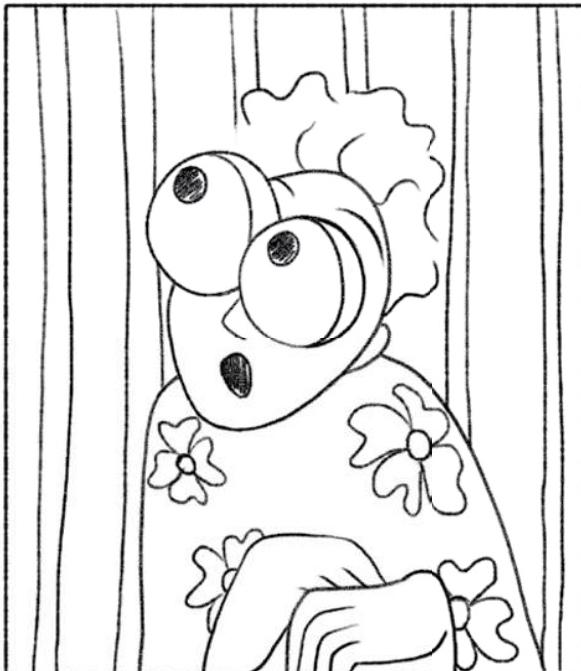
**4. Focus on the feelings you want to convey.**

When you're drawing from your imagination, think about what emotional or psychological tone you are trying to get across to the viewer. Imagine what that tone looks like. How might you draw differently if you're trying to convey excitement versus calm? You may need to embellish, combine, or exaggerate a form or part of a form. Say you want to draw a person who is so surprised that their eyes popped out. Try exaggerating the size of the eyes to drive that idea home. See Figure 2-11.



**FIGURE 2-10:**  
Adding descriptive detail can add to the meaning.

*Jamie Platt*



**FIGURE 2-11:**  
You can use your mind's eye to imagine how an emotion might manifest physically.

*Jamie Platt*

# Project: Bringing Your Vision to Life



SKETCHBOOK

For this project, you will use your inner eye to visualize an idea you have and then use your visualization to make a drawing. Grab some paper, a nice sharp pencil, an eraser, and your imagination. This project purposely does not include any images for reference.

- 1. Think of something you'd like to draw. It might be a memory, a place you'd like to go, or an idea for a character you've been thinking about.**

If you're having trouble coming up with an idea, imagine yourself doing your favorite thing.

- 2. Use your inner eye to visualize the thing you chose.**

Close your eyes if it helps. Spend as much time as you need to build a picture. If you have any trouble seeing it, ask yourself some questions about what it looks like. Start with "What do I see?"

- 3. Examine your thoughts about your idea.**

What would you tell people about it? Do any emotions come up for you? Is it funny, strange, serene?

- 4. Start sketching your idea. Start with something big that everything else can be connected to.**

If you're drawing a room, the big thing might be the lines that make up the walls. If you're drawing a landscape, maybe you draw the line between Earth and sky first. If it's a person or an animal, try getting the simple shape of its torso. If it's a flower, try a shape that describes the perimeter of the flower. You can't really get this wrong. If you realize it would've been easier to start a different way, make a plan to try that next time.

- 5. Once you have something big down, start adding to your drawing. Keep it simple.**

Ask yourself what fits next to the thing you drew first and draw that. Don't get bogged down in details. As quickly as you can, sketch all the parts of the thing you're drawing. Don't worry about shading. Just keep it a line drawing for now.

- 6. Take a look at your sketch. Compare what you have to what you saw with your inner eye.**

Do you need to make any adjustments? If you do, this is where you'll be glad you kept it simple. It's much easier to make changes if you haven't done a lot of detail work. If you got excited and did make something detailed and now you don't want to make a change even though you know you probably should, I recommend you make the change. You'll be able to do whatever you did again. Make any adjustments you need.

**7. Ask yourself if your drawing is conveying the emotions/ideas you thought about in Step 3. If not, think about how you can change it so it does.**

If nothing comes to mind right away, take some time to think about it. You might also try looking at some art you like where you feel a sense of emotion or mood. Ask yourself what about the way it's made is causing you to feel that way. Some things to consider are the kind of lines that are used (broken, fluid, heavy, light), the way the shapes are arranged (crowded, spacious, stacked precariously, and so on), or what the values are like (is it gloomy, bright, dark, and so on?).

**8. Try adjusting your drawing to make it reflect your ideas.**

You might need to change the shapes, add a pattern, add some light or dark shading. Pause periodically to check in with your inner eye to see how things are going.

**9. Finish the drawing. Retrace any tentative lines. Clean up lines you don't need.**

## Trusting your memory

Drawing from memory can be fun and freeing, if you let it be. Working from your memory will not be the same as working from a still life or a photo and that's okay! It shouldn't be. When you work from memory, you get a chance to draw what you remember about whatever it is you're drawing.

Earlier in this chapter I talked about the way your inner eye shapes the way you feel about what you see. Drawing from memory is all inner eye. Whatever your memory drawings lack in accuracy, is more than made up for by the charm of finding out what you remember by drawing. Try making a drawing of someone important in your life without looking at them or their picture. No cheating! When you have it down, take a look at a picture of them to see the similarities and differences. No matter how it turns out, know that what you remember holds interesting information about what you pay attention to. This kind of data is a glimpse into who you are becoming as an artist.



REMEMBER

Whether you're trying to reconstruct a dream or relive an important but undocumented moment from the past, drawing from memory is sometimes the only option. The fragmentary nature of memory makes it challenging, but the good news is, your drawing doesn't need to be a perfect replica to get the job done. From an artistic perspective, what's important about the drawings you make comes down to what's important to you. Use your sketchbook to explore your memory, jotting down descriptions and sketches of things as they emerge. Use your imagination to fill in the gaps in a way that makes sense to you. Your inner eye will tell you if you're getting close or if you need to make adjustments.

## Embellishing with confidence

Embellishing can mean adding decorative elements like stripes or floral motif or it might mean stretching the truth.

When you draw from your imagination or your memory, the only truth you are bound to is to be true to yourself. You can exaggerate. You can embellish. You can combine forms that don't go together. Remember Dr. Dolittle's Pushmi-Pullyu? (Look it up now if you don't.)

What other animal combos would you like to see? A zebra/tiger could be fun. They both have stripes. What would it be called? What kind of challenges would it have? Why not come up with your own animal hybrid and draw it now?

## Making it personal

You will have the most fun on your path as an artist if you commit to making your work align with things you care about. It's easy to get scared of your own ideas, especially when you look around and see all the cool things other people can do. If you do get scared like that, hang in there. Your skills might take a while to catch up to your creative ideas. With practice, your skills will improve.



Being yourself in your work is the only thing that's going to keep you motivated in the long run. It's not as comfortable as copying what's already successful, but when your work is personal, you add your unique voice to the conversation that artists have been engaging in since prehistoric times.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Identifying your aesthetic preferences
- » Looking for inspiration in others and yourself
- » Creating a space for drawing
- » Using your sketchbook and choosing your other drawing supplies
- » Getting used to your new drawing supplies with a simple project

## Chapter 3

# Gathering What You Need to Get Started

**W**hen you look at the masterpieces of the art world, you may think that drawing ability is a gift bestowed only on a privileged few, but that's simply not true. Anyone can learn to draw, which as you've probably already guessed, is where this book comes in.

The truth about drawing is that it's as primal as breathing. Human beings begin to draw as infants, making their first marks before they can even speak. Like talking, drawing is a physical extension of thought. Ideas and senses move from your brain through your arm to your hand and onto the paper as freely as thoughts move through your mouth. Figuring out how to draw realistically is a matter of gaining control over the innate tendency to simply make marks. To start drawing realistically, you need to be able to do two things: see the world around you and hold a pencil. If you can do those two things, your only obstacle to learning to draw is making a commitment.

This chapter shows you how to get comfortable with drawing by incorporating your artistic preferences into your work and explains what you need to get started: inspiration, time, space, and the right materials.



REMEMBER

As you start to draw, try not to criticize yourself too much. You learn even more from your missteps than you do from your successes. At the same time, though, don't overlook the improvement you see in your drawing skills. With a lot of practice and a little patience, you'll be drawing like a pro in no time.

## Exploring Your Drawing Preferences

Because you're a unique human being and no one in the world is exactly like you, it's no surprise that no one in the world draws exactly like you and, more important, that you don't draw exactly like anyone else. Many factors, including the following, influence how and what you draw:

- » The media with which you choose to draw
- » The way you naturally grip your pencil and other drawing media
- » Your life experiences, philosophies, and perceptions
- » Your exposure to art and the history of drawing
- » The kind of art you admire

The following sections help you identify some of your personal drawing preferences by walking you through the different ways to hold your drawing media, the various types of marks you can make with your media, and the basic approaches you can take in your drawings.

### Holding your drawing media

How you hold your drawing media influences how you draw and, consequently, how your finished drawings look. Your grip and the amount of pressure you naturally exert on your drawing media influence the kind of marks you make. Some people naturally draw very lightly no matter how soft the pencil they use is (see the section "Pencils" later in this chapter for more info on the different degrees of pencil hardness). Other people are naturally heavy-handed and tend to make darker marks regardless of what drawing medium they use. You can't change your nature, but being aware of what you do can help you make conscious decisions about the way you draw.

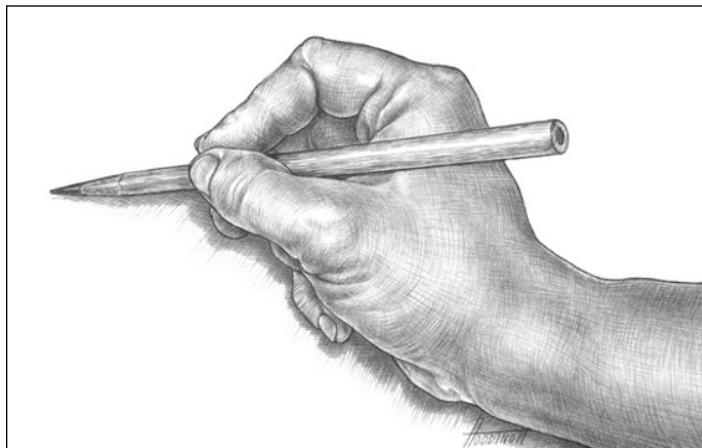
To help you better understand how the way you hold your pencil affects your drawings, take a look at the three most common ways to hold a pencil:



WARNING

» **Holding your pencil the way you hold a pen when you write:** Figure 3-1 illustrates how most people hold their pencils when they first start to draw. Holding your pencil this way gives you better control over fine movement when you're rendering very small or intricate sections of a drawing. This way of holding your pencil works best when your drawing surface is flat or slanted and your drawing itself is small — 8 x 10 inches or smaller — or when you're drawing the fine details of larger drawings. (If your drawing surface is vertical or if you're working on larger paper, I recommend that you try using one of the other two ways of holding a pencil I cover in this list.)

The downside to holding your pencil like you do a pen is that it facilitates such fine control that you may find yourself making small fine movements too early in your drawings. If you hold your pencil in a way that encourages larger, looser marks (like the methods I explain in the next two bullet points), it will be easier for you to quickly block in the basic shapes and basic values of your subject, thus allowing you to get a quick sense of what the drawing looks like as a whole, before you make those small, fine movements artists often use in the final stages of a drawing. (See Chapter 4 for more information about a good order of operations for drawing.)



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**FIGURE 3-1:**  
Holding a pencil  
in the most  
familiar and  
traditional  
manner.

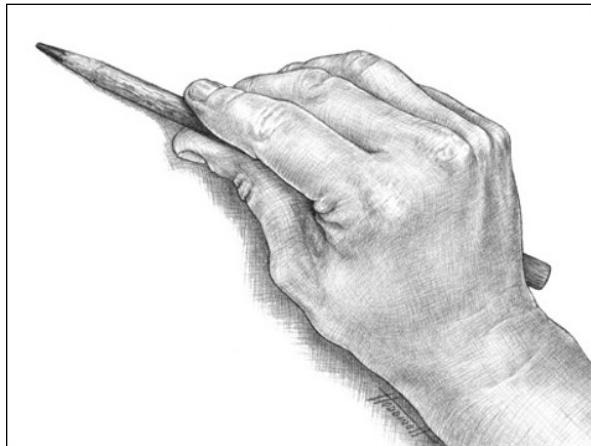
» **Holding your pencil like you hold a stick of chalk when writing on a blackboard:** Figure 3-2 illustrates this option for holding your pencil. This way of holding your pencil is comfortable to use with a drawing surface at any angle — flat, slanted, or vertical — and it's perfect for drawing on larger



TIP

surfaces (larger than 9 x 12 inches). When you use this particular hold, the movement for drawing comes from your whole arm. When you draw from your whole arm, you tend to make larger, looser movements, resulting in larger, looser marks. These loose marks help you lay the foundation for your drawing by creating the basic shapes and values in your subject and keeps you from getting too tight too early in your drawing.

When you get to the part of your drawing where you need greater control over your pencil, like when you're working on an intricate shape or small details, you can simply switch to holding your pencil like you hold a pen to write (see the preceding bullet for more details).



**FIGURE 3-2:**  
Holding a pencil  
the way you hold  
a piece of chalk.

© Brenda Hoddinott

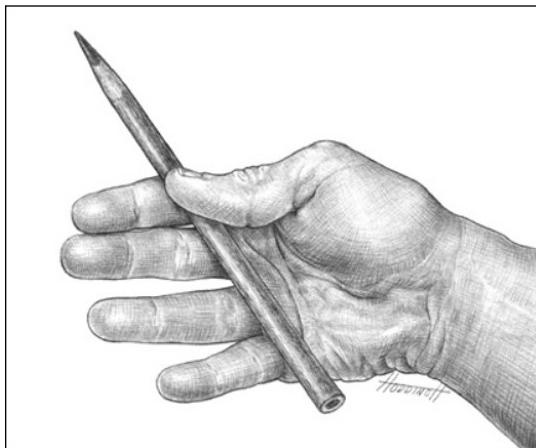
» **Holding your pencil loosely in your hand:** You can hold your pencil this way to make any size drawing on a drawing surface at any angle, but this way of holding your pencil is ideal for working on large drawings (3 x 2 feet or larger) and drawing on vertical surfaces like walls. Holding your pencil loosely in your hand allows you maximum flexibility of hand position, which is helpful when you're drawing from life and need to turn your body away from the paper in order to keep your eyes trained on your drawing subject. (See Chapter 7 for details about when you want to keep your eyes on your drawing subject while you work.)

To try the hold shown in Figure 3-3, reach out to pick up your pencil from a flat surface; it should automatically be in its proper place in your hand. The farther away from your hand you extend the pencil's tip, the more loosely you can draw.



TIP

One or two of these pencil-holding methods may feel a little awkward at first, but with practice, you can get used to them. Choose whichever method of holding your drawing media works best for you at the different stages in your drawing. Depending on the day or the drawing, you may go back and forth between any two or all three of these pencil-holding methods. For example, if you start out holding your pencil as shown in Figure 3-2, you can easily switch to the hold shown in Figure 3-1 when you reach a place where you need more control. If you're holding your pencil as shown in Figure 3-2 and suddenly you need to twist your wrist to be able to comfortably reach part of your drawing, you can switch to the kind of grip you see in Figure 3-3.



© Brenda Hoddinott

**FIGURE 3-3:**  
Holding a pencil  
loosely to allow  
for maximum  
flexibility in the  
way you position  
your hand for  
drawing.

Consider the following as you decide which pencil hold to use:

- » How big or small your drawing paper is
- » Whether you are at the beginning or end of a drawing
- » Whether your drawing surface is flat, vertical, or on an angle

## Making marks with your preferred medium

Making marks on a surface is the core of drawing. Diverse mark-making techniques and different drawing media lend themselves to various manners of drawing, as I demonstrate with the variety of approaches to drawing I cover throughout this book.

You have a huge variety of drawing media to choose from, and although many are similar to each other, some are quite unique. For example, a charcoal drawing looks completely different from a graphite or pen drawing, but you may not be able to tell the difference between a drawing done with charcoal and one done with black conté crayon. In addition to the traditional achromatic media, you can also use colored pencils, colored conté crayons, and pastels to bring color into your drawings (see the later section “Choosing Your Drawing Supplies” for more details on these different drawing media).

Every drawing medium has its own range of expressive mark, meaning the texture and degree of softness or hardness of the tool affects whether the marks it makes are clean or messy, smooth or grainy. Additionally, each medium has its own maximum degree of lightness and darkness. For example, graphite is relatively smooth and light (even at its darkest) when compared to compressed charcoal, which is powdery, grainy, and dark even when applied lightly.

In addition to the differences in media, the kind of marks you make when you draw depend on your unique way of drawing. As discussed in the previous section, everyone exerts a unique and natural pressure on their drawing tool. Likewise, everyone has a natural inclination to certain types of marks. Yours may be emphatic and angular or curvy and lyrical. The possibilities are endless, but one thing is certain: When it comes to mark-making, your personal combination of habits is completely your own.



TIP

Knowing your marking habits doesn't mean you should define yourself strictly by them. In fact, it's healthy to try working in ways that aren't common or comfortable, so try experimenting with different drawing media and different types of marks every once in a while. Some may surprise you and become part of your drawing style. But even as you experiment with new marks and media, keep in mind what your habits and preferences are; doing so gives you a better idea of who you are as an artist.

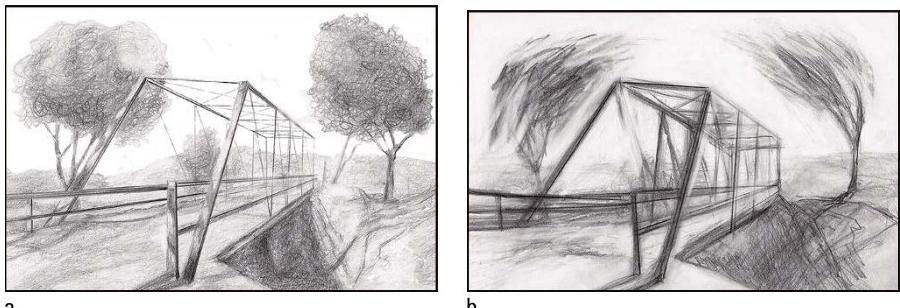
## Deciding whether to leave your drawing loose and sketchy or to tighten it up

Every artist has a unique approach to drawing. Some love big, bold, loose drawings. Others like tiny drawings with lots of intricate details. Before you decide once and for all which approach you prefer, give both approaches (and everything in between) a try. You never know when your preferences may change or grow to incorporate new approaches you'd never before considered. For example, you may be convinced that you love only sketchy drawings with lots of evidence of process and realism until one day you find yourself mesmerized by the beauty of magical illusion in M.C. Escher's *Drawing Hands*. Or perhaps you're set on drawing only



fantastical drawings until one day you find yourself transfixed by Käthe Kollwitz's powerful etching *Woman with Dead Child*. (To see either of these drawings, just type the name and artist into your favorite search engine.)

There's no inherently right or wrong way to draw. The approach and style you use in your drawings depend on your perceptions and logic. For example, if you want to make a drawing of a bridge and your favorite part about the bridge is its intricacy, it makes sense for you to render the drawing tightly and with a lot of detail to highlight its intricacy (see Figure 3-4a for an example). If, on the other hand, what impresses you about the bridge is the way it stands up to the wind, you may choose to render the drawing loosely to draw attention to the bridge's solidity amidst turbulence (see Figure 3-4b for an example). So before you start drawing any subject, ask yourself what about that subject and its surroundings grabs you and then try to figure out why.



**FIGURE 3-4:**  
Rendering a loose  
versus a tight  
drawing of a  
bridge.

Jamie Combs

# Finding inspiration

So you know you want to give drawing a try and you've picked up this book to help you get started . . . now what? You need to figure out what you want to draw, of course! You may have a few tried and true subjects that you've grown comfortable with drawing, but I'd be willing to bet you're ready to expand. If you're looking for new drawing subjects or you've ever felt a strong desire to draw without having any idea what to draw, you've come to the right place. This section is all about finding inspiration for your drawings.

## **Figuring out your interests**

Perhaps the most overwhelming thing about finding inspiration for your next drawing is that just about anything can make a good subject. No matter what type of drawing you want to do, anything in the real or imaginary world is yours for the taking. With so many choices out there, how do you choose? Here's a tip: Pick a

subject you care about. Passion for your subject matter is extremely important because it's what sustains you when things get difficult. Plus, you'll grow more and faster as an artist if your subject matter makes you feel excited. So before you start your first drawing, spend some time figuring out what kinds of subjects you care about.



TIP

To help you determine what kinds of drawing subjects you care about, make a list of things you like. Write down anything that comes to mind and resist the temptation to edit yourself. Designate an area in your home or work space as an inspiration board. Clip and hang anything that grabs you, including photos, poems, and postcards. Over time you may notice patterns in the kinds of things you post to your board; these patterns can help you understand your interests in a whole new way. For example, you may notice that you tend to save poems and postcards that have something to do with water. After you see a pattern, take a little time to explore that interest in a series of drawings.

## Getting ideas from other artists' works (and yours, too!)

People have been drawing for a very long time. Throughout history, humans have used art to communicate and immortalize events and objects. For example, drawings in the caves of prehistoric humans provide historians with insight into their way of life. The early Egyptians used drawings to decorate many structures, including tombs. Indigenous people all over the world used natural materials, such as clay, to make drawings that represented their lives. And the drawings of such revered artists as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci explored science, human anatomy, and perspective.



TIP

Check out the Internet or your public library to find out more about the history of art and the artists who've made it. Be sure to explore all different types of art. If you don't know where to start, ask a librarian to help you locate some survey books on art history so you can see the various art historical movements that have reached across the globe. By studying past works, you can discover countless different techniques, styles, and subjects that you can use to help you develop your own drawing skills.

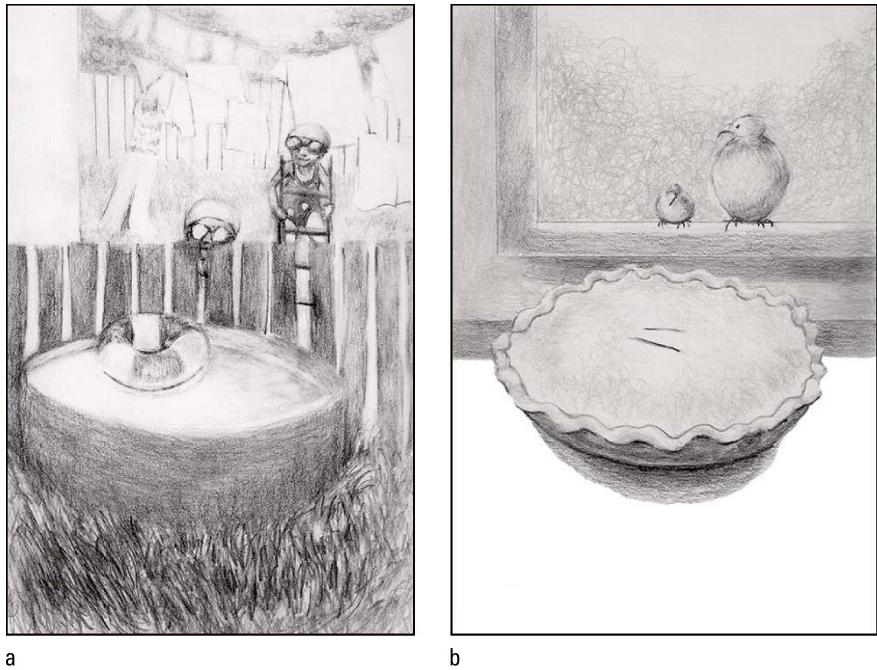
Copying great works of art is a great way to learn the ins and outs of drawing, but you don't have to re-create a whole drawing to derive the benefits you get from copying. If you find yourself intrigued by some fragment of a work of art, go ahead and copy just that part. Try to determine what about that fragment interests you, and then try to replicate it in your own drawing.



REMEMBER

If you copy from someone else's work, even if only in part, you can only legally do so if you have the permission of the artist who created the work or if you're copying for your own personal research. Although you can't present your copies as your own work, copying is a wonderful way to develop your drawing skills and practice new techniques. See Chapter 16 for more information on copyright laws.

You can also look for inspiration in your own earlier works. For instance, you can use a work you've already made as a springboard to make a new drawing. Choose a drawing you like, pick some element you like in it, and begin your new drawing by re-creating that element. Then use your imagination to take the drawing in a whole new direction. Take a look at Figure 3-5a for the inspiration piece behind the drawing in Figure 3-5b. The artist who made both of these drawings borrowed the composition and basic shapes from the first drawing to use as inspiration for the second drawing. The two swimmers in Figure 3-5a become the two birds in Figure 3-5b, while the pool in the yard becomes a pie on a windowsill.



**FIGURE 3-5:**  
Finding inspira-  
tion from your  
own earlier  
works.

## Drawing on your memories

Your memory can be fertile ground for drawing ideas. After all, nothing is more personal than your own memories. But before you start drawing from memory,

remember that memory isn't perfect. To get the most benefit, try to allow yourself the freedom to draw imperfectly whenever you make a drawing based on your memory.

Before you begin any drawing from memory, think about what you want to accomplish through the drawing. If your goal is to make a highly realistic image based on a memory, find some source material, such as photographs or live models, to draw from to help you create the most realistic rendition of your specific memory. If, on the other hand, your goal is to reconstruct the emotional or psychological framework of your memory, don't stress about making the drawing perfectly realistic. Instead, focus on representing the emotions and the thoughts you had during that memory in your drawing.

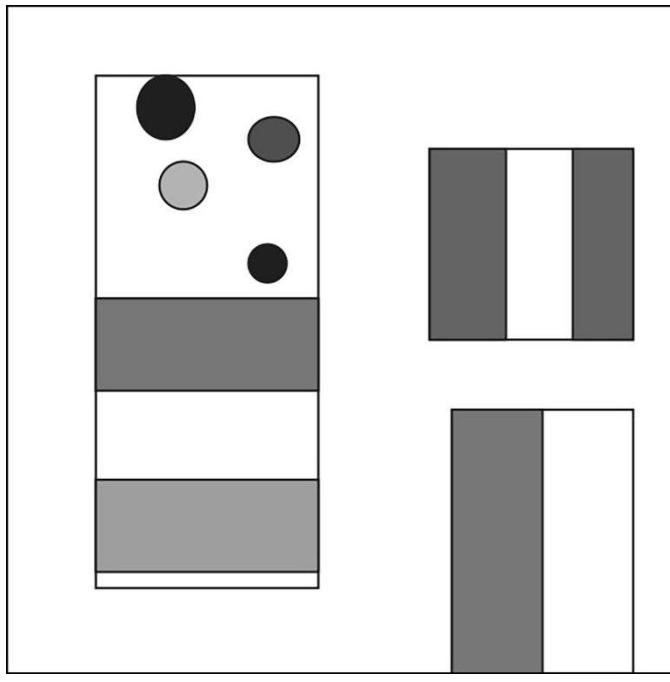
Sometimes drawing from memory is a practical solution when you see something you'd love to draw but can't at the moment. The trick to remembering your subject and its surroundings is to try to absorb as many of the visual details as you can so that you can re-create them on paper later. Like with any skill, you can sharpen and improve your ability to recall visual details with practice. To start practicing now, try your hand at the following exercise, which gives your visual memory a little workout.



For this exercise, you need a stopwatch or something similar to time yourself with, your sketchbook, an extra piece of paper, a ruler, and a 2B pencil (see the upcoming section "The well-stocked drawing toolbox" for details on these tools). After you have these materials, follow these steps:

- 1. Use your ruler and a 2B pencil (although any pencil will do for now) to draw a 4-x-4-inch square in your sketchbook.**
- 2. Look carefully at the drawing in Figure 3-6 for 30 seconds and try to remember as many details as you can.**
- 3. After 30 seconds, cover Figure 3-6 with the extra piece of paper.**
- 4. In the square you drew in Step 1, draw as much of Figure 3-6 as you can remember.**
- 5. Uncover Figure 3-6 and compare it to the drawing you made in Step 4.**

You can repeat this exercise in infinite variations. Try it with photos or pictures from a magazine. Try it in real life; stare at something for a while and then turn your back to it. Add variety and extra challenge by staring first for 2 minutes, then 1 minute, and then 10 seconds! By exercising your mind this way, you train it to look at your surroundings more closely. With a little practice, you can improve your mind's ability to retain what you see.



**FIGURE 3-6:**  
Drawing from  
memory.

*Jamie Combs*

## Carving Out Space and Time to Draw

If you're lucky enough to have a spare room in your home, you can easily convert it into your very own drawing studio, devoted exclusively to your art. But you don't need a whole room to create an effective, comfortable space for drawing. You can create a personal drawing space in a small, busy home simply by sharing an area with others or by converting a corner of a room into your studio. The following sections show you how. They also describe how to make time for drawing even when life is at its busiest.

### Making your drawing space comfy and effective

Whether you have your own studio or just a corner of a room, your drawing place needs to be free of distractions and full of the furniture and other supplies you need to draw comfortably. If others use the same space, do a little careful planning and make some compromises to make sure that you get plenty of personal drawing time without inconveniencing others.



TIP

No matter where you set up your studio, be sure to include the following elements to make your drawing space as comfy and effective as possible:

- » **Adjustable drafting table:** Adjustable drafting tables are designed so you can adjust the height and tilt of your drawing surface for your drawing comfort. Check out stores and yard sales for a good deal. Many people also sell used equipment over the Internet. Just type *used drafting table* into any search engine.

If you don't want to purchase an adjustable drafting table, you can easily turn your kitchen or dining room table or your computer desk into an ideal drawing space by moving it into your drawing space. You can also create a portable, sloped drawing surface by using books to prop up one end of a drawing board.
- » **Bulletin or display boards:** Bulletin boards allow you to display some of your favorite drawings, inspirational images, photos, and articles in your studio. You can find some relatively inexpensive and readily available display boards at your local hardware store.
- » **Comfortable, adjustable chair:** You absolutely must have a comfy chair if you spend several hours a week drawing at a table. After all, you definitely don't want your back to become tired and sore as you draw. An adjustable chair allows you to adjust the height to a level that's right for you, and a chair on wheels allows you to move around easily.
- » **Light source:** Having a window in your drawing space is the best lighting option, but, even if you have one, you also need a flexible-neck lamp that you can attach to your drawing table for overcast days and evenings.
- » **Sound system:** If you have a hard time concentrating on your projects in your studio (especially if you're using a shared space), use a pair of headphones to listen to your favorite music to block out noisy distractions and help you focus on your drawings. If you have your own studio room, feel free to use a stereo with speakers rather than headphones.
- » **Storage containers:** Keep your drawing materials organized and safe from small children and pets by storing them in some type of portable container with a lid, such as a large shoebox or a small tackle box. That way, you can easily store them under a bed or in a closet when you're not using them. If you have a free drawer or shelf somewhere near your drawing space, store your supplies there.

You may also want to get a small table or storage cart (preferably one on wheels) for holding your drawing materials as you work. If you have space to put a shelving unit, you may want to get one to hold your art books, drawing materials, and portfolios.

Don't limit yourself to these suggestions. Visit some furniture and art supply stores and look through some decorating books and magazines for more ideas of what you can add to your drawing space to make it work for you.

## Finding time for drawing



TIP

If you allow drawing to become a habit, you'll find that even when you're at your busiest, you can find time to squeeze in some drawing. The following tips can help you make time for drawing in a busy schedule:

- » **Carry a small sketchbook in your pocket, purse, or backpack.** That way, you're always ready when inspiration strikes.
- » **Take advantage of downtime you have when you're out and about.** When you're out in public spaces, you have the opportunity to sketch people doing lots of different things.
- » **Make the most of your leisure time.** You can find lots of opportunities to draw during downtime at social events. For example, if you're at a party watching your friends play games, why not draw them? You can also take your drawing materials with you when you go visit family and friends.
- » **Include family members or friends.** Get a group of friends or family together and make arrangements to meet one night a week for a kind of drawing club. Take turns bringing refreshments, motivating one another, and sharing ideas as you draw.

## Using Your Sketchbook

Your sketchbook is part journal, part best friend. You can use it as a testing ground for new ideas and as a place for documenting different experiences. Above all, though, your sketchbook is a place where you can recapture the excitement you felt for drawing when you were a child and didn't care if anyone was watching you.

Some people like to keep only one sketchbook at a time, while others prefer to keep separate books for separate issues. However you like to organize your sketchbooks, get in the habit of carrying one with you wherever you go. That way, you can pull it out to draw at a moment's notice. The following sections explain how to draw on location, so to speak, and how to use your sketchbook to test new drawing ideas.

## Sketching away from home

Sketching is a wonderful way to preserve an experience you had away from home. All you need is your sketchbook, a drawing utensil, and somewhere to draw. The beauty of sketching is that you can do it anywhere, even places where cameras aren't allowed.



TIP

Whenever you draw on location, try to make yourself comfortable so you can concentrate on your drawing. If you plan to be out of doors for any length of time, be sure to take sunscreen, a hat, a bottle of water, a coat (if it's chilly), and anything else you may need to make you comfy. Locate restrooms and available shelters near where you plan to go in case the weather turns bad unexpectedly. Consider whether you prefer to sit or stand. If you like sitting, you may want to invest in a lightweight folding chair.

You follow the same drawing process whether you're drawing at your home studio or on location. Think about it as though you're building your drawing. Start by blocking in a general map of where the different pieces will go. Next, break your subject(s) down into simple shapes. Finally, work to refine the subject(s) to make them look more realistic. Add shading and textures if doing so helps you achieve the look you're going for and if you have enough time to do so.

Assess how much time you have to spend drawing so you can gauge your goals and expectations for the drawing. If you don't have time to complete a drawing onsite the way you'd like to, you can take a picture of it and try to finish it later. Photographs will not capture the scene exactly, but you can help yourself by making notes in the margin about light, color, and anything else you want to remember. (Check out Chapter 4 for more details on the drawing process.)

Sometimes when you're drawing on location, you may want to add people to your drawing. Adding people to a drawing livens up the space, but doing so is also a little daunting. After all, people move around a lot, making it difficult to capture all the details of their bodies and faces in a drawing.

To help you get the most out of your on-location drawing sessions, think of sketching people as an exercise to improve your drawing skills. Focus on quickly getting a sense of how a particular person stands, sits, or walks rather than whether that person is wearing strappy sandals or has an aquiline nose. Quickly sketch the shapes made by the shirts, legs, arms, and heads of the people you're drawing. As you have time, you can think about things like stripes on shirts and hair length. Figure 3-7 shows a quick sketch that includes people.



TIP

Sketching people as they move about their days is a great way to practice your skills at gesture drawing. (See Chapter 13 for more on gesture drawing.) Don't add more detail to the people than you do to the area around the people. If the people look too detailed, they won't blend in to the surroundings in your drawing.

**FIGURE 3-7:**  
Sketching  
people quickly.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*



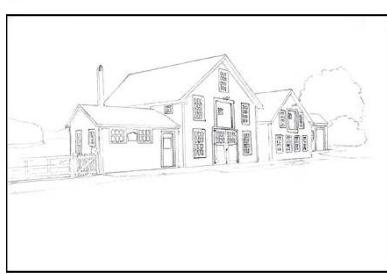
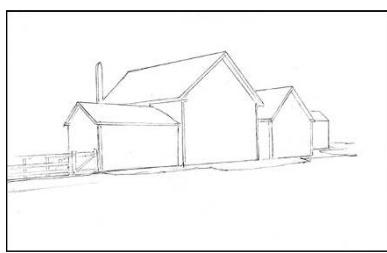
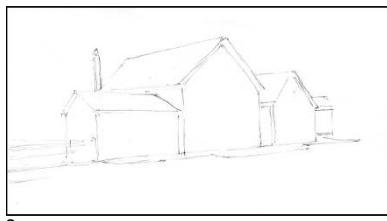
To practice building a sketch on location, grab your sketchbook, 2B pencil, and vinyl eraser (see the upcoming section “The well-stocked drawing toolbox” for details on these tools) and venture somewhere away from your home to a place where you think you can find something interesting to draw. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Using your 2B pencil (although any pencil will do for now), lightly draw lines to indicate the placement, size, and direction of the major forms in your drawing subject and its surroundings.**
- 2. Break your subject(s) down into the simplest shapes you can; draw these simple shapes on your paper (see Figure 3-8a).**
- 3. Compare your drawing to the actual subject to make sure the shapes are in the right relationship to each other and nothing is too high or too far apart.**  
Make corrections to your drawing if any of these relationships are inaccurate.
- 4. Add simple shapes of value if you want to add shading to your drawing.**

**5. Refine the simple shapes into more accurate shapes (see Figure 3-8b).**

Simple shapes like squares and other rectangles are great for blocking in the dimensions and basic shapes of most architecture, but to make the shapes look more realistic, look for places where the architectural features of your subject depart from simple boxlike shapes. For example, the sides of the roofs in Figure 3-8b are basically rectangles. But, to be more accurate, the artist gave them a three-dimensional quality by drawing narrow rectangles running along the edges of the sides of the roofs. Having drawn the simple rectangles first, the artist could easily change the drawing to better reflect the roofs' three-dimensionality because she had already worked out their placement and dimensions.

- 6. Add small shapes to indicate windows, doors, and other details in your subject(s) and its surroundings (see Figure 3-8c).**
- 7. Adjust the lightness and darkness of your lines to make them look more realistic.**



**FIGURE 3-8:**  
Making a sketch  
on location.

*Barbara Frake*

## Playing with ideas

One of the most liberating uses for a sketchbook is as a playground for testing ideas. You don't ever have to show your sketchbook to anyone if you don't want to, so feel free to test all your ideas — even the most outrageous ones. Have an idea you're unsure of and afraid to talk about out loud? Tell it to your sketchbook. Don't worry about accuracy or traditional rules of drawing when you draw in your sketchbook. Just be yourself and let your imagination and pencil run wild.



TIP

If you don't have any ideas to work out in your sketchbook, do the following to help get your creative wheels turning:

- » Keep a journal in which you make one drawing each day to record something that happened that day; if you have a particularly boring day, make a drawing of something you thought about that day.
- » Keep a journal of weird facts. Look up bizarre facts on the Internet or at the library and make a list of the ones you find most interesting. Imagine what would happen if you combined some of them in a drawing.
- » Keep your sketchbook by your bed so that when you wake up you can make drawings of any interesting dreams you had while sleeping.
- » Ask your friends to tell you something they learned that day; then use their insights to make a drawing.
- » Go someplace that scares you and make a drawing of it. Maybe it's the musty basement or the top of a hill that all the neighborhood kids use for sledding. (Just make sure it isn't someplace where you'd be in actual danger.)

## Choosing Your Drawing Supplies



TIP

Don't let money or access to special equipment get in the way of your desire to draw. The truth is you can have a great time drawing with any paper and any tool you have on hand, whether it's a number 2 pencil or a ballpoint pen. You can make excellent drawings with these humble tools, too.

Having said that, the old expression "You get what you pay for" definitely applies to art supplies. For example, some inexpensive pencils are scratchy instead of smooth, making them incredibly frustrating to draw with. Although you're better off buying good-quality art materials from a reputable art store, you can save money in other ways. Shop around. Sometimes the same brands of high-quality materials are available at several stores at different prices. Another way to save

money is to buy only the supplies included in the section “The well-stocked drawing toolbox.” Purchase just enough to get started with drawing; then when your skills and budget increase, you can invest in some of the fun but less essential items covered in the upcoming section “The wish-list items.”

## The well-stocked drawing toolbox

The following sections describe the basic supplies that are helpful in getting started with drawing and to do the projects in this book. Figure 3-9 shows you some of the supplies to collect as you start your drawing practice.



**FIGURE 3-9:**  
Drawing supplies.

*Jamie Combs*

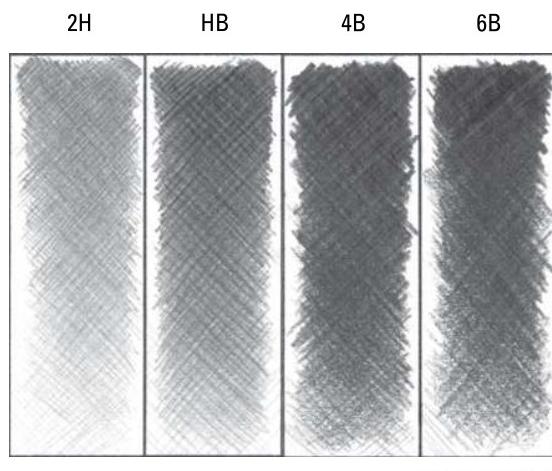
## Sketchbook

Sketchbooks come in all sizes and qualities. As a beginner, try to balance the quality you can afford with the quantity of sheets you need. In general, a 50- or 100-sheet pad of recycled sketch paper is an excellent choice. At this point in your drawing career, you want to be able to make lots of drawings without worrying that you’re wasting money on extremely high-quality paper. Choose a size that

suits your needs. A good all-purpose size is 9 x 12 inches, but you may want to purchase another smaller book that you can toss in your bag for easy access throughout the day.

## Pencils

The most important pencils for a beginner are 2H, HB, 2B, 4B, and 6B. The 2H is the lightest (hardest), and the 6B is the darkest (softest). Figure 3-10 shows you the full range of marks made by four of these pencils. You can expect to use the HB, 2B, and 4B the most often.



**FIGURE 3-10:**  
The range of  
values made by  
four popular  
graphite pencils.

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TIP

If you hate having to stop midway through your drawings to sharpen pencils, you may want to choose mechanical pencils. I recommend using 0.5mm (available in lots of different stores) for regular drawings and 0.3mm (available at most art supply stores) for very detailed drawings. When you're sketching loosely or on a large surface (or both), try using a 0.7mm mechanical pencil.

## Erasers

You need two types of erasers — a vinyl and a kneaded. Here's the difference between them:

» **Vinyl eraser:** This eraser is usually white, long, and rectangular and has a band of paper around it that displays its name. Vinyl erasers are sometimes labeled *soft* or *extra soft*. Either type works just fine, but you may want to pick one of each to see which one you prefer. If you find vinyl erasers that aren't

labeled for softness, don't worry; they all erase fairly similarly. This type of eraser also comes in a retractable stick form, similar to a mechanical pencil. That means you can hold it like a pencil! You can erase with much more control with a stick eraser. They come in different widths for different levels of precision.

- » **Kneaded eraser:** This eraser is gray, and its plastic packaging is usually clearly marked with the name of the eraser. If you have a choice, choose the largest one you can find. The price isn't that different, and the extra surface area is well worth the extra cost. You may want to keep two kneaded erasers, one exclusively for erasing graphite and one just for erasing charcoal.

If you aren't familiar with either of these erasers, have a salesperson help you choose which brands are best. And don't worry if you don't know what to do with these erasers after you buy them; I introduce you to various ways to use them throughout this book.



WARNING

## Pencil sharpener

You need a pencil sharpener for some drawing media (even if you're using mechanical pencils for graphite drawings), so be sure to add one to your art toolbox. The pretty or fancy sharpeners don't work any better than the simple, plain sharpeners, so save your money and choose a basic, hand-held metal sharpener with two openings: one for regular pencils and one for oversized pencils. These simple sharpeners last a long time, and you can buy replacement blades for them when your old ones become dull.



TIP

You can also use a piece of sandpaper or a *sandpaper block* (which is just a wedge of cardboard to which several small sheets of sandpaper are attached) to sharpen pencils.

## Rulers

Rulers come in metal, plastic, and wood, but I suggest buying a metal one because it'll last a lot longer and is easier to use and clean than the wood and plastic varieties. A regular 12-inch ruler works for most projects, but an 18-inch one comes in handy when you're working on larger projects.

## Charcoal

Charcoal pencils and sticks come in grades from hard to medium to soft. Though charcoal is available in fewer grades than graphite, many charcoal utensils are labeled the same way as graphite pencils: 2B, 4B, and so on (refer to Figure 3-10 for different pencil labels). The labeling means the same thing for both charcoal and graphite (see the earlier section “Pencils” for details). Sometimes you may find charcoal that’s labeled only hard, medium, soft, and extra soft. Just purchase a few medium (2B) and soft (4B) charcoal pencils and a couple of soft (4B) compressed charcoal sticks for now. I show you how to test-drive your new charcoal in a fun project in Chapter 11.

## Fixative

**Fixative** is a protective coating that you apply to your drawing from an aerosol or non-aerosol spray bottle. It’s an essential item to have on hand when you’re drawing in charcoal, but it’s also extremely helpful when you’re working with graphite. This coating helps to prevent smudging by “fixing” the graphite or charcoal to the paper. Fixative comes in workable or final types. Workable fixative helps the paper retain its texture so that you can work on it as easily after you spray it as you did before you sprayed it. For this reason, workable fixative isn’t as protective as final fixative. Both fixatives come in a variety of finishes from matte to satin to glossy. Ask a salesperson at your local art store for advice about which brands to buy.



WARNING

Most fixative is hazardous to use inside. There are some milk-protein based fixatives that are less harmful and can be used inside. Read the label and do some research. If you are unsure about the safety of your fixative, use it outdoors so that you have plenty of ventilation to protect your health.

## Portfolio

Every artist needs a *portfolio*, which is basically just a flat, sturdy case you use to store and/or transport your work. You can store your drawing paper and completed drawings in your portfolio to keep them safe from being crumpled or damaged.

Portfolios are available at art supply stores in a range of sizes, materials, and prices. Most of the time, a portfolio made from lightweight cardboard gets the job done, but if you decide to purchase a cardboard portfolio, look for one that’s acid free, or at least pH neutral, to protect your papers and drawings from yellowing. (If you’re unsure how to determine whether materials are acid free or pH neutral, ask a salesperson for help or look it up on the Internet.) A water-resistant portfolio is a must if you plan to transport work in rainy or snowy conditions. Canvas, vinyl, and leather portfolios all offer some protection from the elements.



TIP

If you don't want to buy a portfolio right away, you can easily make one from corrugated cardboard or matte board hinged with duct tape.

## The wish-list items

At some point in your drawing career, you may want to experiment with other media besides graphite and charcoal and higher-quality paper than your basic sketchbook. Here are some fun art supplies you can add to your drawing toolbox when you're ready to move past the necessities cover in the preceding section:



TIP

» **Colored pencils:** If you want to add a little color to your drawings, buy a set of colored pencils. Just be sure to stay away from the cheap ones; they're too waxy to blend properly, and they fade quickly. Ask someone at an art supply store to recommend a good-quality set for a beginner.

» **Conté crayons and chalk pastels:** Choose from either sticks or pencils. A basic set of conté crayons includes black, a couple of grays, a sepia (brown), a sanguine (reddish brown), and a white. Pastels come in an infinite range of colors, but you should start with a beginner set of assorted colors.

If you choose the pencil type of conté or pastels, you need to buy a utility knife or sandpaper block to sharpen them. Both are available at art supply stores.

» **Powdered graphite and/or powdered charcoal:** You can buy jars of ground graphite or ground charcoal from most well-stocked art and craft stores. You can use either of these powders to tone your drawing paper for subtractive drawings. (See Chapter 8 for details on subtractive drawings.) You can use a brush, cotton swab, or other applicator to apply these powders to your drawings.

» **Nonstandard pencils:** You have an enormous range of options in the world of graphite pencils. In many brands, pencils run from the super hard 8H (which is so light you can barely see it) all the way to the ultra-rich, extra soft, black 9B. I recommend getting in the habit of adding one or two new pencils at a time to your collection on a regular basis.

Woodless pencils are one variety to try as soon as possible. These pencils are composed entirely of graphite encased in a thin plastic coating. Woodless pencils are graded the same way as standard graphite pencils but tend to make a softer, more velvety mark than standard pencils. One challenge with woodless pencils is that they tend to break when dropped. Woodless pencils are especially nice for the graduated tone shading technique because the end is all graphite so you don't have to stop drawing to sharpen them (see Chapter 8 for details on this technique).

» **Special drawing paper:** Special drawing papers can add a lot of fun to your projects. They come in hundreds of colors, textures, and types, so feel free to go nuts! The best way to see how a paper works is to try it. One great drawing paper is 140-pound, hot-pressed, watercolor paper. Its surface is fairly smooth, but its *tooth* (or texture) is adequate for most drawing media, and it's very forgiving of erasers. (Some delicate or spongy papers will pill or tear if you erase too firmly.)

## Project: The Pupil of Iris



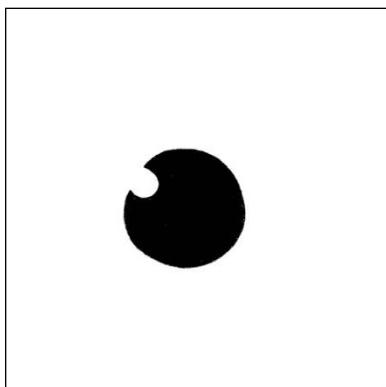
In this project, you get to experiment with each of the drawing tools listed in the earlier section “The well-stocked drawing toolbox.” Gather up those tools and follow these steps to draw an eye:

**1. Use your ruler to draw a square in your sketchbook any size you want.**

This square is your drawing space for your project. Decide if you like drawing large or small objects before you choose the size of your square.

**2. Use your charcoal pencil to draw the outline of a small circle inside your drawing space, leaving out a small section the shape of a backward letter C in the top left of the circle; then fill in the circle very darkly with your charcoal pencil (see Figure 3-11).**

Your circle should look like someone took a bite out of it. Don't forget to leave the C-shaped section white; this white section will become the highlight of the eye.

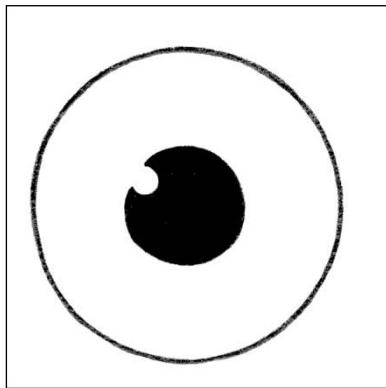


**FIGURE 3-11:**  
Drawing the pupil  
of the eye and  
leaving a space  
where the  
highlight of the  
eye will be.

© Brenda Hoddinott

- 3. Use your 6B pencil to draw the outline of a large circle around your first circle (see Figure 3-12).**

You may choose to draw the larger circle freehand, but you can also use a compass or some other tool to help you.



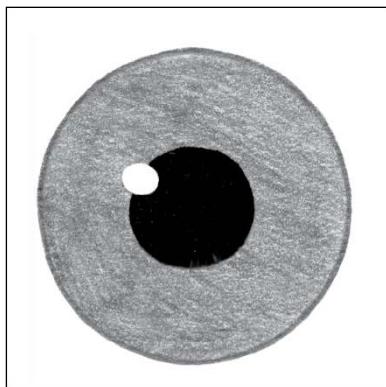
**FIGURE 3-12:**  
Drawing a circle  
to represent  
the iris around  
the pupil.

© Brenda Hoddinott

- 4. Use your HB pencil to outline the other half of the C-shaped space you left in Step 2.**

Look closely at this tiny circle, called a *highlight*, in Figure 3-13. It helps make the iris of the eye look realistic. The highlight stays the white of your drawing paper.

- 5. Use your HB pencil to fill in the whole space inside the big circle, except for the highlight (refer to Figure 3-13).**



**FIGURE 3-13:**  
Creating the  
eye's highlight  
by leaving it  
the white of  
the paper.

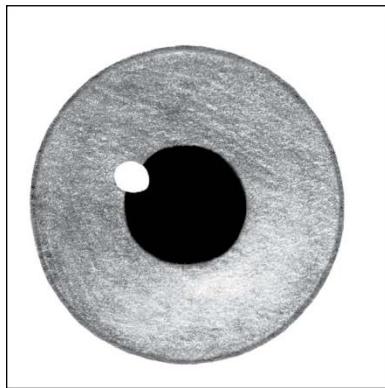
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6. Pull and stretch your kneaded eraser until it becomes soft, mold it to a point, and use that point to gently pat the shading on the side of the circle opposite the highlight (see Figure 3-14).

Keep patting until this small area becomes a little lighter than the rest of the shading. This little technique makes the eye look even more realistic.

7. Use your vinyl eraser to clean up any smudges or fingerprints on your drawing paper.

**FIGURE 3-14:**  
Using your  
kneaded eraser  
to lighten the  
value of the part  
of the iris across  
from the  
highlight.



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#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Exploring the five developmental stages of drawing
- » Walking through a simple project to see how the drawing stages come together

## Chapter **4**

# Working through the Developmental Stages of Drawing

*“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”*

—LAO TZU

Mastering the different components of drawing comes with time and practice. As you begin to draw, remember that your efforts won't always look “perfect.” Instead of seeking perfection, get ready for a long yet fulfilling journey as you discover and use the skills you need to make drawings that are personal and satisfying.

This chapter walks you through five stages that artists go through when learning to draw. The stages are arranged in order of increasing complexity. The information in this chapter is enough to introduce each concept and highlight how the stages relate to one another. You can find in-depth information about each stage in later chapters.



REMEMBER

There is a lot of information in this book about learning to draw realistically. You might be wondering what to do if you don't care about being able to do that. Don't worry. It is important to note that there are as many ways to draw as there are artists and no one way of drawing is better than any other. My advice is to give it a try. Learning to draw realistically is actually about becoming a more sensitive observer. No matter what kind of drawing you love to do, being a sensitive observer will make you better at it.



TIP

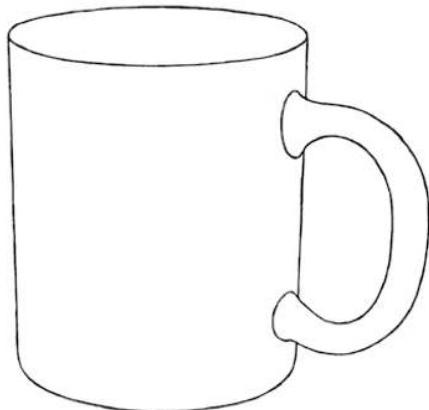
Save all your drawings even if you don't like them at first. (If space is an issue, photograph and save your drawings digitally.) Get in the habit of recording the dates of each drawing. Seeing your progress over time helps you assess how far you've come in your artistic journey. As with any journey, the destination isn't what matters most. The best part of drawing is in the process.

## Stage 1: Looking for Lines

The line is arguably the most elemental component of drawing. Most people get their first drawing experiences scribbling lines as children. Nearly all drawings begin with lines. Some drawings begin *and* end with lines. Take a look at Cy Twombly's *Leda and the Swan* for a great example. (To find it, plug the name and title into your favorite search engine.) This drawing is a tangle of energy that never develops into anything beyond a mass of lines; yet, it's still a whole and complete drawing.

Lines are a handy way to delineate the edges of just about anything you see. The trick is learning to block out the dazzling complexity of an object so you can see its edges clearly.

To see what I mean, find a mug or other simple object with a handle. Place it in front of you and look closely at it. Focus your eyes on its *contours* (the outside edges of the mug and the edge it makes up the inside of the handle). Try to imagine the object drawn only in lines like the ones you might see in a coloring book (see Figure 4-1 for an example).



**FIGURE 4-1:**  
Drawing an  
object's contours  
as lines.

© Brenda Hoddinott

## Stage 2: Moving from Lines to Shapes

You can break all objects down into simple geometric shapes. A lollipop might be simplified into a line with a circle on top. A car in profile might be simplified into a rectangle with two circles on the bottom. When you break an object down into its simple geometry, it won't look exactly like the object, but it gives you a great foundation to start with. Sometimes you need to be a little flexible to see the shapes that make up a given object. For example, the coffee cup in Figure 4-1 is made up of a rectangle with a fragment of a circle sticking out of it. You could start your drawing by making a rectangle and then drawing a circle the size of the handle overlapping the rectangle at about the place where the handle goes. Your drawing wouldn't look exactly like this cup if you drew a geometrically accurate rectangle with a geometrically accurate circle overlapping it, but, the shapes would get you on the path. Fortunately, the shapes you draw don't have to be geometrically correct. You won't need a ruler or a compass. Instead, when you draw your shapes, try to be responsive to the shapes you see and the way you see them.

Figure 4-2a shows a photograph of a street in Bloomington, Indiana. In Figure 4-2b, you can see the basic shapes that make up this scene. To determine what shapes to draw, the artist of Figure 4-2b looked at the objects and imagined which geometric shape each one most closely resembled. Notice that some of the shapes that make up the objects in the photo aren't geometrically exact in the simple sketch in Figure 4-2b, but the essence of each shape is there. For example, the bay window on the side of the building is basically a square, the road is basically a trapezoid, and the tree is basically a circle.



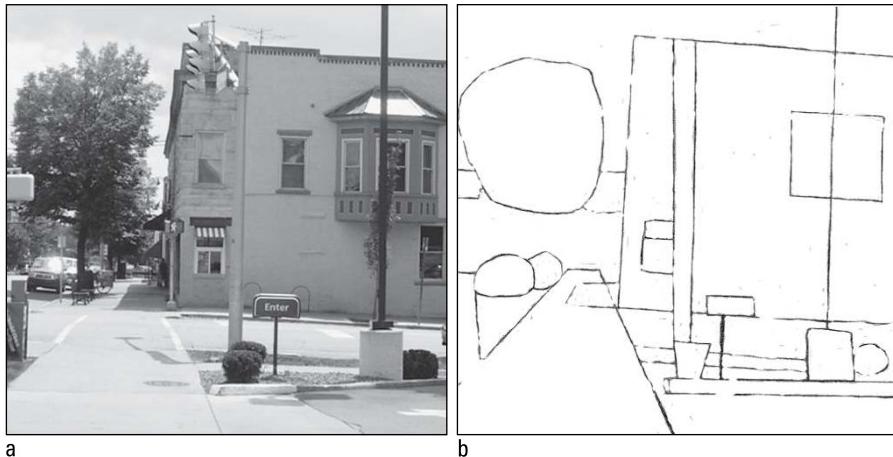
REMEMBER

Because the objects in photographs are already flat, it's fairly easy to see the simple shapes that make them up. All you have to do is trace around the outline of an object in a photo to discover its simple shapes. In real life, it's a little more difficult. The detail and fullness of three-dimensional objects can be distracting. To reduce a three-dimensional object to its simple shapes, you must be able to look at it as though it were flat. Make a habit of paying attention to the essential shapes that make up whatever it is you're drawing. With practice, you'll retrain your eyes to automatically notice the shapes that make up objects. (If you have trouble retraining your eyes, gather up some photographs and look for the simple shapes of the objects in them; doing so can help you train your eyes to recognize the flat shapes that make up three-dimensional objects. If you're using digital photographs you could even use digital mark-up tools to trace the shapes you see.)



TIP

When you draw, start by drawing the simple shapes that make up your subject. That way, you can edit or erase your lines later as you develop your drawing.



**FIGURE 4-2:**  
Breaking objects  
into simple  
shapes.

*Jamie Combs*



REMEMBER

Some subjects look easy to draw but turn out to be quite difficult. On the other hand, some subjects look really hard to draw but turn out to be very easy. Regardless of how complex a particular drawing subject is, the key to rendering it successfully is being able to break it down into its basic shapes. If you feel frustrated when drawing a certain subject, remember to simplify, simplify, simplify! (See Chapter 6 for a detailed explanation of how to break down any subject into basic shapes.)

# Stage 3: Adding a Third Dimension: Volume

For many drawing subjects, lines and shapes are all you need to make a complete drawing (see the previous sections for details). However, if you want your drawing subjects to look realistic and three-dimensional, you need to create volume.

In drawing terms, *volume* is the illusion of three-dimensionality. It's what turns a circle into a sphere, a triangle into a cone, and a square into a cube. Two tools you can use to create the illusion of volume are perspective and shading. I describe these drawing tools in the next sections.



REMEMBER

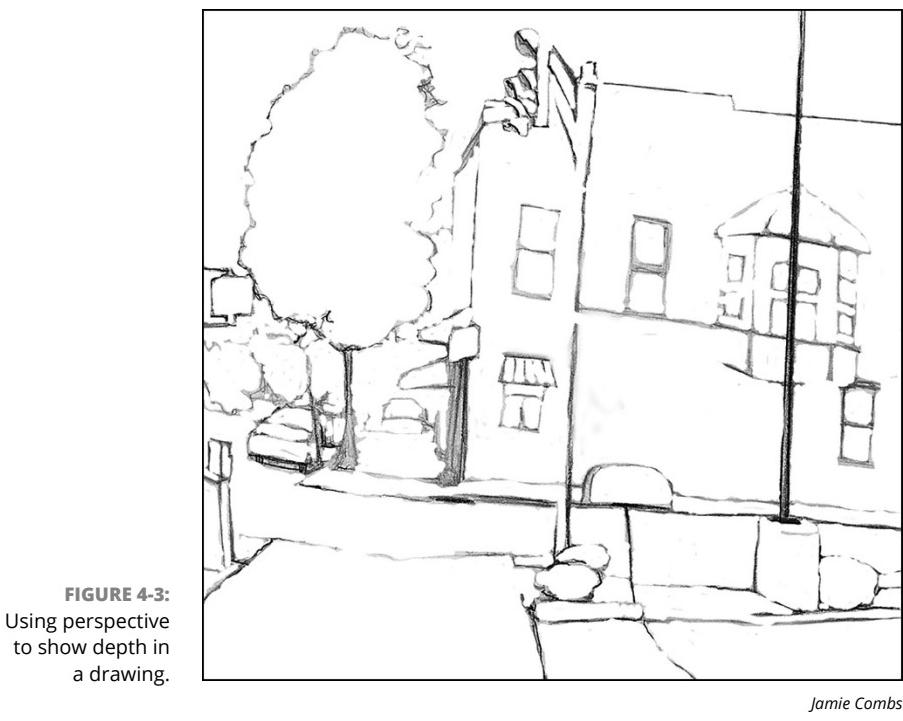
Paying attention to perspective and shading allows you to represent a three-dimensional structure on paper. For instance, when you draw objects with perspective in mind, you can make them sit in space in a believable way. Shading makes them look even more realistic. (I show you how to use perspective and line-weight variation to create volume in Chapter 7. I show you how to use shading in Chapter 8.)

## Using perspective to create depth

*Perspective* is basically the way objects and spaces appear from a particular point of view. *Perspective drawing* refers to the rendering of objects and spaces on a two-dimensional surface. When you understand perspective, you can make more realistic drawings.

Figure 4-3 shows how an artist used perspective techniques to create a convincing illusion of depth. This drawing picks up where Figure 4-2b left off and uses simple shapes to help refine and add depth to the original sketch. For example, the diagonal lines drawn on the left and right sides of the bay window tell your eyes that this window sticks out away from the wall.

Figure 4-3 also incorporates an element of perspective called *atmospheric perspective*. *Atmospheric perspective* is the phenomenon of the way atmosphere changes the appearance of things. One example is the fact that objects in the distance look less distinct than objects that are close up. In Figure 4-3, you can see that the utility pole is much more distinct than the cars off in the distance on the left side of the drawing. (See Chapter 7 for a lot more details on atmospheric perspective.)



## Building light and volume through shading

*Shading* refers to rendering the different *values* — various shades of gray — in a drawing. To draw an object realistically in black and white and to give the object volume, you need to translate the colors, light, and shadows into shades of gray.

Before you start drawing a particular object, look for the light and shadows in and around that object. Light and shadow determine where you need light and dark shading to create the right amount of contrast (the difference between light values and dark values). Accurate contrast is the primary ingredient of shading that makes your drawings look three-dimensional (see Chapter 8 for more details).

Figure 4-4 shows a realistic rendition of a rather complex subject — a human foot. Notice how the artist used a range of grays to shade the many swells and valleys in the foot to make it look three-dimensional and realistic.



REMEMBER

Shading is a wonderful way to show the topography of any object. For example, the soft depressions between your toes usually fall into shadow while the protruding flesh of your foot catches light. You can translate the shapes of light and shadow you see on an object into shapes of gray shading in your drawings. If you get the shapes of shadows and light in the right places and in the right amounts, your drawings will have the same qualities as real life and your volumes will be believable.



**FIGURE 4-4:**  
Using value to  
create the illusion  
of volume.

*Jamie Combs*

## Stage 4: Rendering Textures



SKETCHBOOK

Textures add a degree of realism to a subject. Plus, they're fun to draw! Think about the trunk of a tree, the surface of a mirror, the fur of a dog, or the wool in a sweater. To represent these textures in a drawing, follow these basic steps:

**1. Look for the shadows in and around the object you're drawing.**

For example, look at a tree trunk in person or in a photograph. Notice the many shadows that lie within the creases of the bark.

**2. Choose an appropriate shading technique.**

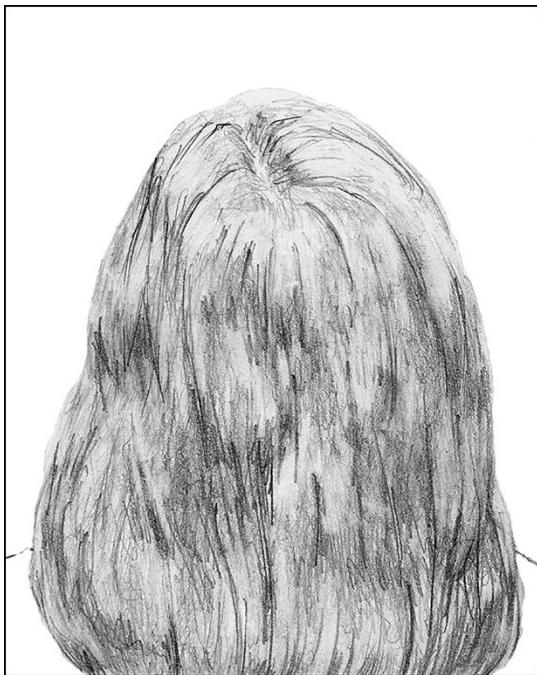
An appropriate shading technique is one that allows you to accurately represent the texture of the object you're drawing. In the case of the tree example, it makes sense to choose a shading technique that allows you to mimic the feel of the texture. See Chapter 9 for tips on choosing shading techniques for creating texture.

**3. Use the technique you chose in Step 2 to draw the shadows in the object.**

Creating convincing textures depends half on accurately depicting the values you see. See Chapter 9 for more on accurately depicting values.

Figure 4-5 shows you a close-up view of the texture of long, slightly wavy hair. You can tell the hair has slight waves because of the shadows the artist created using the hatching technique (see Chapter 13 for details). When a section of hair swells away from the head, it catches light. When a section of hair dips down toward the head, it moves away from the light. Although it looks like a mass of stands of hair, the artist didn't draw individual strands of hair to create the hair's

realistic effect. Instead, she focused on the light and shadows falling on sections of hair and used lines to represent places where one section of hair overlaps another (see Chapter 13 for more details on drawing hair).



**FIGURE 4-5:**  
Texture makes a  
drawing of hair  
look more  
realistic.

*Jamie Combs*

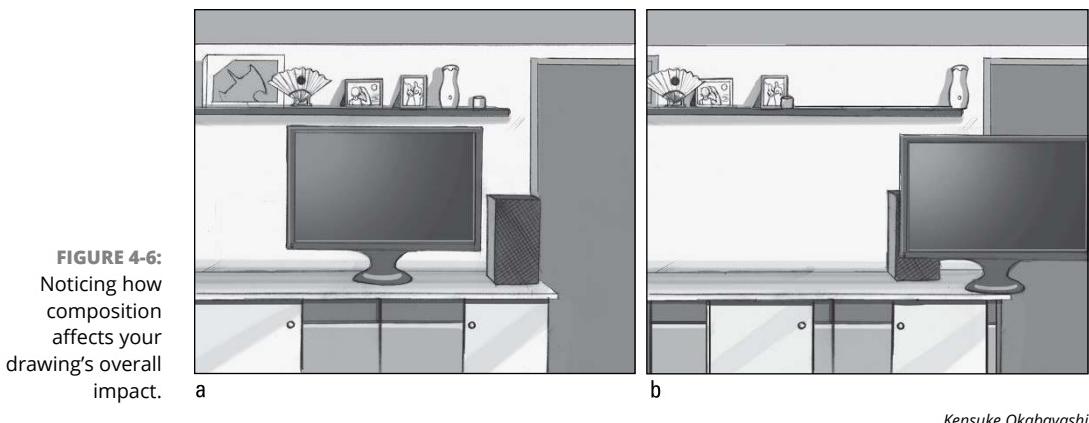
## Stage 5: Arranging the Elements: Composition

*Composition* is the arrangement of your drawing subject or subjects and the space surrounding them within your drawing format. How you compose your drawing plays a big role in its final impact.

When you're first starting to draw, you may be entirely focused on getting your subject down on paper. The essentials of seeing lines and shapes and adding volume and texture may consume so much of your artistic energy that you end up placing your drawing subjects in random places on the paper.

Unfortunately, your drawings won't look whole until you figure out how to make good use of your entire drawing surface. One way to start being intentional about

composition is to consider how you can use the shape and space of the drawing surface to highlight the important qualities of your subject. Take a look at Figure 4-6 for an example. Both drawings involve the same subject matter, but the impact each drawing makes is quite different.



In Figure 4-6a, the space around the subject frames the subject nicely. The subject is wider than it is tall so the horizontal-rectangle placement is a good choice for drawing attention to the overall shape of the subject. The artist clearly thought about how the scale of the object would relate to the scale of the whole drawing, and the positive/negative shape relationships that would be created. See Chapter 5 for more information about how to plan a composition. Figure 4-6b, on the other hand, shows what happened when the artist didn't think about composition and placed the subjects randomly on the paper. He started by drawing the television without considering that if he placed it too far to the side, he wouldn't be able to fit the whole television into the drawing. As a result, the television is cropped at the edge of the drawing. Because the television is clearly an important subject in the drawing, the cropping looks awkward and accidental.

The difference between these two drawings is simple but powerful. Be thoughtful about compositions and watch your drawings improve.



TIP

A good composition is *balanced* and *interesting*. These two words have different meanings for every artist because what constitutes balance and interest is different for each artist. But when you start out, you may want to follow a few basic guidelines and formulas to help you achieve a balanced and interesting composition in your drawings. Chapter 5 explains these guidelines in detail and shows you some strategies to compose your drawings. Using these guidelines from the get-go will help you discover what it means to achieve strong compositions.

# Project: Getting Into the Process



SKETCHBOOK

In this project, I show you what it looks like to peel away the layers of a drawing one stage at a time so that you can see the separate parts and how they work together.

Unlike most of the projects in this book, this project asks you simply to look at the drawings shown here and examine them for evidence of the five drawing stages I describe earlier in this chapter. However, you can easily make this project more hands-on. All you need are a couple of sharp pencils (2B and 4B are good choices), some tracing paper, a ruler, and an eraser.

## 1. Look at the finished drawing.

For the moment, separate yourself from the content (or story) of the drawing. Try to analyze the finished drawing in Figure 4-7 based only on what you see. Notice how the drawing is a composition (or purposeful arrangement) made up of lines, shapes, values, and textures.



FIGURE 4-7:

Looking at the finished drawing.

*Kensuke Okabashi*

## 2. Imagine what the composition of the drawing in Figure 4-7 would look like without volume, shading, or texture — that is, as simple lines and shapes (see Figure 4-8).

At this stage, the objects are merely suggested by the simple lines and shapes that make them up.

If you're doing the more hands-on version of this project, place a sheet of tracing paper over the photocopy of the finished drawing in Figure 4-7. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to trace the border of the drawing. Then use a 2B pencil to trace (or draw) the simple shapes that make up the objects in the drawing. Also use your 2B pencil to draw any essential lines that don't make shapes. (*Essential lines* are ones that have a big function in the drawing. Horizon lines and electrical wires are good examples of essential lines to include because they typically take up a lot of space in a drawing.) Some lines, like the ones that define wrinkles on someone's face, are detail lines; leave these lines out at this stage.



**FIGURE 4-8:**  
Reducing the  
composition to  
lines and simple  
shapes.

Kensuke Okabayashi

**3. Imagine what the composition of the drawing in Figure 4-7 would look like as a simple line drawing without value or texture (see Figure 4-9).**

Compared to the bare-minimum shapes and lines in Figure 4-8, the simple shapes in this version of the composition have been refined into accurate line drawings of the objects. The composition is basic, but everything is in place.

If you're doing this project on your own, place a sheet of tracing paper over the photocopy of the original drawing, use your ruler and 2B pencil to trace the border of the drawing, and then use your 2B pencil to trace the accurate shapes of the objects. (If you're feeling extra ambitious, try to refine your simple shapes from Step 2 into line drawings.)

**FIGURE 4-9:**  
Reducing the  
finished  
composition to a  
simple line  
drawing.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*

- 4.** Imagine what the composition of the drawing in Figure 4-7 would look like made up entirely of values and textures, without any drawn lines or shapes (see Figure 4-10).

The values and textures in this version still form shapes, but no lines separate one shape from another. Even so, you can still get a strong sense of the whole composition without any lines.

If you're doing this project on your own, place a sheet of tracing paper over the photocopy of the finished drawing and use your ruler and 2B pencil to trace the border of the drawing. Then use a 2B pencil to trace the values and textures you see. Switch to your 4B pencil if you need to make darker marks. Pay attention to the lines that make up any textures, and copy them as closely as you can. (See Chapter 9 for more details on accurately re-creating textures.)



All the stages of a drawing work together to become the finished whole. Next time you make a drawing, consider the stages I cover in this project. Pay attention to the way you build the drawing to mirror these stages and remember that each part is just as valuable as the one that comes before or after it.

**FIGURE 4-10:**  
Reducing the  
finished  
composition to  
values and  
textures.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*





# **Developing Basic Skills**

### IN THIS PART . . .

Learning all about composition, including the basic elements of composition, several formulas for creating good compositions, and tools for planning your own compositions.

Starting strong with a guide to building a drawing from the ground up, including the different types of lines to use, how to simplify any drawing subject into its core elements, and how to construct an object using gesture drawing and simple shapes.

Plumbing the depths of creating depth in drawings first by mechanical means, with an exploration of linear perspective, and then moving to a freehand approach using line weight variation to translate flat shapes into three dimensional volumes.

Moving into value with a discussion of light and shadow, an explanation of shading techniques, and working with value in your drawings, including treating color as a value.

Noticing characteristics of different types of textures, learning how to create them, and learning how to manage the illusion of texture on a three-dimensional volume.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding the basic elements of composition
- » Identifying and applying a few proven compositional strategies
- » Planning and composing with various drawing tools
- » Putting composition to work with a simple project

## Chapter **5**

# Planning Your Drawings

The idea of planning your drawings before you put pencil to paper may seem to oppose the romantic image of the sensitive artists who pour out their souls through their works, but trust me, if you aren't in the habit of planning your drawings, you just might change your mind after reading this chapter. If you've ever had a drawing fail because you've drawn a beautiful object only to find out you don't know what to do with the rest of the paper, you've come to the right place. Don't worry; making a few plans before you start drawing won't take away all the fun!

Planning a drawing begins with the impulse to draw. If your impulse to draw is inspired by a particular subject, lucky you! (If not, check out Chapter 3 for ideas about how to find inspiration.) After you know what you want to draw, try to articulate what you find compelling about your subject. When you know what draws you to something, you have a story to tell in your drawing. You're not really a storyteller? No worries. Your story doesn't have to be elaborate. For instance, the story you want to tell about that sunflower in your garden may be simply that you like the way the plant catches the sunlight.

The central focus of this chapter is the phase of planning called composition, which basically just outlines the steps you can take to work out your story visually on the paper. Don't worry if the idea of composing your drawings sounds a little intimidating; I'm here to help you through it!



REMEMBER

The term *composition*, as it relates to drawing, refers to the purposeful arrangement of lines, shapes, values, textures, and sometimes colors within the borders of a drawing space. Good composition is one of the most important, if elusive, aspects of making art. When a composition works, it captivates the viewer's attention and provides clues to the meaning of the artwork. In this chapter, you find some simple and effective strategies to help you start making strong compositions.

## Focusing on the Elements of Composition

To make good compositions, you first need to know what the elements of composition are and how to use them; then you can focus on working them into your drawings for maximum effect.

The elements of composition are like the words that make up a sentence. Each one means something on its own, but the real significance lies in how you put them together. Here's a brief look at some significant elements of composition:

- » **Focal point:** A center of interest (or focus) in a drawing.
- » **Overlapping:** The visual suggestion of depth made when one form overlaps another.
- » **Positive/negative space (sometimes called positive/negative shape):** The positive space in a drawing is the space occupied by the major subjects. The negative space is everything else. In this case, the words "positive" and "negative" aren't value judgements. You can also think of this relationship as figure (positive) and ground (negative).
- » **Lines:** Lines in a drawing, whether actual or implied, that guide the viewer through the different parts of the drawing.
- » **Balance:** A stable arrangement of visual weight within a composition.
- » **Contrast:** The degree of difference between light and dark values. When it comes to color, contrast is the degree of difference between hues. For example, green and blue are relatively low in contrast because they have more in common compared to red and green, which are relatively high in contrast because they have less in common.
- » **Proportion:** The amount of space allocated to the various components of a drawing.

In the following sections, I explain each of these elements in more detail and provide examples of how you can use each element in your compositions.

## Emphasizing the focal point

A drawing can be more interesting when it has a focal point — a specific area where you want your viewers to focus the majority of their attention when they look at your drawing. For example, the focal point in a portrait may be the subject's eyes or hands, and, in a landscape, it may be one specific tree or flower.



REMEMBER

Your drawings illustrate your subjects from your unique perspective. Think about what's important to you in your drawing and choose a focal point that helps you call attention to it. Keep in mind that you can choose to have more than one area of focus in your drawing if doing so makes sense for your subject and the story you want to tell about it. In that case, you have a *primary focal point* and secondary and even tertiary focal points.



TIP

After you choose your main point (or points) of interest, you can use many artistic devices and techniques to highlight that point. Follow these tips as you work to emphasize your focal points effectively (Figure 5-1 shows these tips in action):

- » **Beware of the center.** A focal point in the center of your drawing can become like a bull's eye for the eye. You don't want the viewer's eye to get stuck in one spot while all the other important elements of your drawing get ignored. In Figure 5-1, the main focal point (the girl pedaling a tricycle) is below and just to the right of center. Your eye may automatically go to this focal point first, but you still register the other objects in the drawing.
- » **Make good use of additional focal points.** Secondary and tertiary focal points are like supporting characters, important to the story but not the most important aspect. You can use additional focal points as anchors to help balance a composition, especially when the primary focal point takes up only a small amount of space in the drawing. In Figure 5-1, the car is the secondary focal point, and the girl pedaling a tricycle is the primary focal point. The car creates balance in the drawing because its presence encourages you to look at the whole drawing. In other words, it keeps your eye from going straight to the focal point and getting stuck there. (Check out the upcoming section "Balancing subjects in a composition" to find out how secondary focal points can help balance a drawing.)
- » **Use objects within your drawing space to point to your focal point.** You can guide the eyes of the viewer to your focal point by arranging objects in such a way that they function like arrows. For example, if your focal point is a particular tree in a field, you can arrange your drawing so that a line of less significant trees forms a path leading the eyes of the viewer to the focal point. In Figure 5-1, the diagonal thrust of the car leads your eye to the focal point (the girl on the tricycle). (See the upcoming section "Creating a functional eye path" for more about using other objects to point to your focal point.)



**FIGURE 5-1:**  
Focal point hierarchy.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

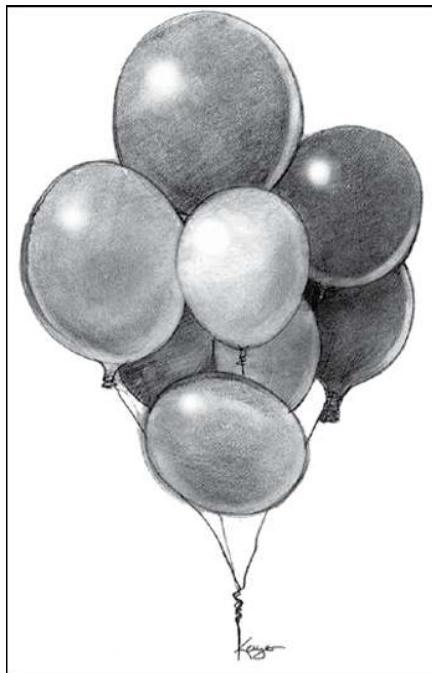
» **Define the focal point with more detail and a stronger contrast in values than other aspects of your drawing.** A focal point is a part of the drawing you want the viewer to pay special attention to. To attract your viewer's attention, you need to enhance the visual interest of your focal point. For example, when an aspect of your drawing is high in contrast or intricately detailed, it tends to draw the viewer's eyes more strongly than aspects that are lower in contrast or less intricately detailed. In Figure 5-1, the focal point is set in the distance, yet it's also the most detailed and visible part of the drawing. (See the upcoming section "Balancing subjects in a composition" to find out more about how visual interest equals visual weight.)

## Overlapping for unity and depth

Overlapping is the most basic way to give your drawings the illusion of depth. The simple act of making one thing appear to be in front of another is enough to make the viewer believe it actually is in front. Imagine how much depth you could suggest simply by lining up a row of trees, each one overlapping the next.

Overlapping also helps bring unity to the different parts of a composition. When objects overlap, the physical connection you draw on the paper ties them together in the eyes of the viewer, thus creating a link that the eyes follow across the drawing.

In Figure 5-2, overlapping creates an illusion of depth (the lightest balloons are in front of the darker ones) and helps tie together the different balloons in the composition.



**FIGURE 5-2:**  
Creating depth  
and unity by  
overlapping your  
subjects.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Taking advantage of negative space

In composition, the term *positive space* refers to objects, while *negative space* refers to the shape(s) made by the space surrounding the objects. The shape of an object or objects gives shape to the negative space. Picture a simple hair comb. The comb's teeth shape the space between the teeth. Negative space plays an important role in how the comb looks. Without it, it would be useless for untangling your hair. (See Chapter 6 for more info about how you can use the negative shapes of objects to draw the positive shapes of objects.)

In addition to defining the shapes of objects, you can use negative shapes in composition to tell stories about your subject matter. Here are just a few examples of how you can tell stories with negative shapes:

- » **You can use negative shapes to define relationships between objects.** For example, if your viewers see few or no negative shapes between two objects (people, vases, fruit, and so on), they likely perceive those objects as a group; whereas, if they see a lot of negative shapes between two or more objects, your viewers are less likely to perceive them as a group.
- » **You can use negative shapes to call attention to similarities of shape.** For example, if two objects of complementary shapes are near each other in a drawing, the negative shape(s) between them will call attention to the relationship between them. Complementary shapes appear to fit together like pieces of a puzzle. For example, imagine that you arrange an orange next to a banana so that the curve of the orange nestles into the curve of the banana. If you move either fruit to create a space between them, the negative shapes between them draw attention to the curved shapes of the fruit. In Figure 5-3, the curve of the right side of the glass is complementary to the shape of the pan. It appears as though the shape of the pan would fit into the shape of the glass. The negative shape between these two objects draws attention to this similarity.
- » **You can use negative shapes as a frame to call attention to the shape and orientation of an object or group of objects.** For example, if an object has a tall, vertical shape and you frame it with a negative shape that has a tall, vertical shape, your viewers will be more aware of the height of the object. Consider this: A tall, narrow tree will look taller if you design your drawing so the negative shape (the shape around the object) is also tall and narrow. To do so, use a tall, narrow piece of paper to make your drawing or simply draw a tall, narrow rectangle to use as a border for your drawing.
- » **You can use the negative shape of a large foreground object as a window for viewing other objects.** For example, the negative shape formed by the limbs of a tree may provide a portal for looking into the scene behind the tree.

## Using lines to your advantage

Lines are multipurpose drawing tools. In your drawings, you use construction lines to describe the objects, values, and textures that you draw. You can also use compositional lines to create paths through a drawing to encourage the eyes to move through the drawing at a particular speed and in a particular direction. An eye path can be an actual line or broken line, like those on a highway that snakes through a landscape, or it can be an implied line, like the imaginary line connecting a row of people waiting for the bus.

**FIGURE 5-3:**  
The negative shapes in this drawing look the way they do because of the way the artist arranged the positive shapes.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Create a functional eye path

Think about your eye path as a tool that helps your viewer circulate through your drawing. To make sure no one gets stuck in any part of your drawing, try to create an eye path that guides the eye to one subject and then provides an exit route to other areas of your drawing. Figure 5-4 shows an example of a drawing with a clear eye path that guides the viewer through the drawing.

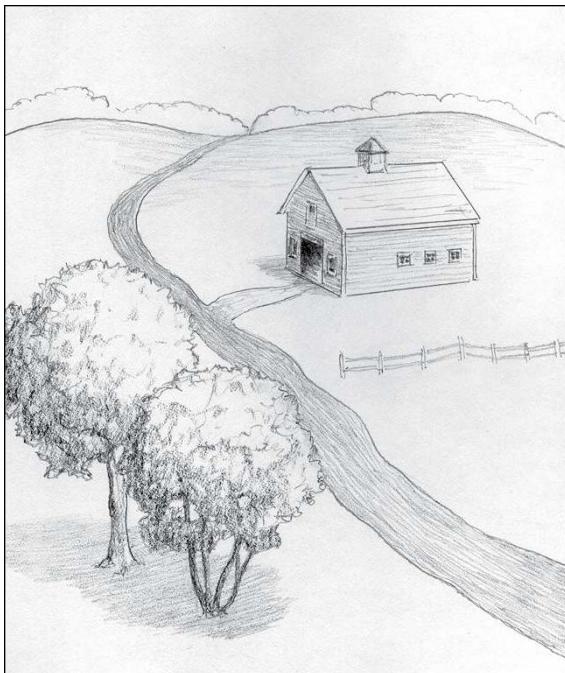
When you create an eye path through a drawing, you control the direction and speed at which the viewer moves through a drawing. If the lines you use to create this eye path meander through the space in long, gentle twists, the viewer will move through the drawing in a similar way (by twisting slowly down the eye path). However, if you use sharp, diagonal lines, the viewer will move through the drawing in sharp diagonals, too. You can use either of these eye paths and numerous others to guide the eyes of the viewer through your drawing in a particular way.



**WARNING**

Make sure that your eye path doesn't lead the viewer out of the drawing. In Western cultures, people tend to read images the same way they read text, from left to right. If your eye path leads to the right side of the paper, it may point the viewer directly out of the drawing, just as effectively as a big neon EXIT sign. To make sure your viewer doesn't exit your drawing too soon, you can change the direction of the line to guide the eyes of the viewer back into the drawing. For example, if your eye path takes the viewer to the right side of the drawing, arrange an object or group of objects on that side in a way that makes the eye path turn or curve, angling the eyes of the viewer back into the action of the drawing.

**FIGURE 5-4:**  
Using  
compositional  
lines to create  
an eye path.



*Barbara Frake*

If you don't know what you want your eye path to look like, think about how you want your viewers to feel when they look at your drawing. Do you want them to feel relaxed? If so, use lines that change direction smoothly and gradually to allow the eyes of the viewer to drift slowly through the drawing. If you want them to feel rushed, use lines that change direction frequently, encouraging the eyes to move rapidly through the drawing.



REMEMBER

The character of the line — whether it's curvy or straight, horizontal or diagonal, and so on — elicits an emotional response from the viewer, and that response becomes part of the drawing's overall meaning.

## Break down static and dynamic lines

All the different compositions you can create using lines fall into two basic categories: static and dynamic. The way you organize the lines in your composition determines whether your composition is static or dynamic. In general, a static composition is made with mostly vertical and/or horizontal lines and a dynamic composition is made with mostly curved and/or diagonal lines.

The character you give the lines in your composition communicates emotions. Here are some examples of different types of lines and the feelings and emotions typically associated with them:

- » Gently curving lines often reflect beauty, gentleness, and calmness. Specifically, the s-curve denotes balance and grace.
- » Tightly curving or coiled lines can reflect a tangled or frantic energy.
- » Horizontal lines often reflect stability, peace, and/or serenity.
- » Vertical lines often reflect strength, grandeur, and/or dignity.
- » Diagonal lines often offer a sense of change, movement, and power.

In a *static composition*, the viewer feels an overall sense of order and stability. To convey strength, balance, and permanence in your drawing, emphasize the vertical and horizontal aspects of your subject matter. Figure 5-5a shows an example of a static composition in which the horizontal and vertical lines work together to create a sense of order.

In a *dynamic composition*, the viewer feels an overall sense of movement and change. Both curved and diagonal lines begin in one place and move outward and up or down, moving beyond the horizontal and vertical locations of their origins. A dynamic composition may reflect any degree of motion from gentle to frantic. You can use dynamic compositions to underscore movement or overwhelming scale. For example, you'd need to rely on sharp, diagonal lines to create a realistic image of airplanes flying across the sky. See Figure 5-5b for an example of a dynamic composition.

**FIGURE 5-5:**  
You can use lines  
to create dynamic  
or static  
compositions.



a



b

*Kensuke Okabayashi*



TIP

One exception to this way of talking about static vs dynamic compositions is the triangle. An equilateral triangle with a horizontal base is just as stable as a rectangle. A triangle's diagonal sides add enough dynamism to keep things interesting. Artists often use triangle compositions to create family portraits.

## CHOOSING THE SHAPE OF YOUR DRAWING SPACE

Before you start putting pencil to paper, you need to consider the orientation and shape of your drawing space. If your goal is to show a subject to the best possible effect, the way the paper frames the subject makes a big difference. For example, if your subject is a portrait, a vertical rectangle is a good choice because people are often pictured vertically. However, if your subject is a panoramic view of a landscape, a horizontal orientation may be a better choice because the horizontal rectangle draws attention to the way the landscape spreads out before you. Rectangles are the easiest shapes to use for drawings, because rectangular paper is readily available. Keep your mind open to other shapes, though. If you're drawing a portrait or a cityscape, for example, a round or irregularly shaped format may be a fun change.



REMEMBER

Most compositions fall somewhere between purely dynamic and purely static. When you're trying to decide where on this spectrum you want your composition to be, consider your subject matter and the attributes you want to highlight in your drawing. If you're still unsure, make small test drawings using a couple of different compositions before you start.



TIP

Carefully planning your compositions before you start drawing can save you a lot of time and frustration. You can usually avoid having to start a drawing all over again if you have a solid composition from the beginning. Before you start working on whatever paper you want to use for your drawing, make lots of thumbnail sketches in your sketchbook to test out possible compositions. Sketches can help you figure out the best way to represent what you think about your subject. For instance, sketches help you answer questions about where things go, what size things are, and what types of lines you need to use to represent things the way you see them. There's no right number of sketches to make before you start your actual drawing; just work on sketches until you feel like you have one that feels balanced, whole, and interesting to you. Five or six sketches are a good number to start with, but for some drawings, you may want to make more. Even if you think you know the first sketch you make is the one you want to use, try a few more possibilities just to be sure.

## Balancing subjects in a composition

A balanced composition is typically more aesthetically pleasing and harmonious than an unbalanced one. To make a balanced composition, you have to grapple with an imaginary gravity called *visual weight*. When a subject is highly compelling, it has a lot of visual weight; when you don't really notice something, it has little visual weight.



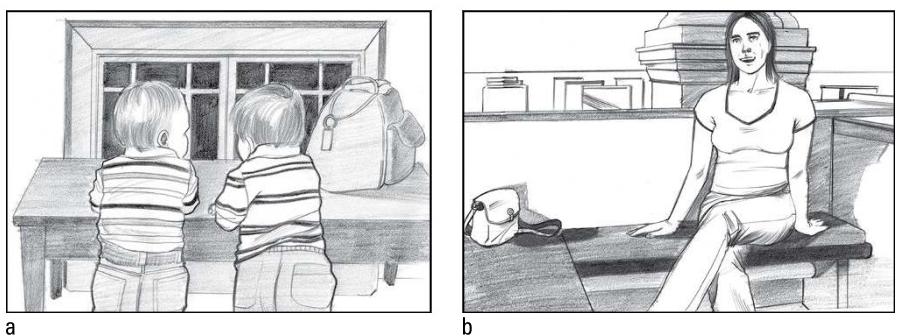
TIP

The main problem you run into when drawing subjects with a lot of visual weight is making sure they don't hold the viewer's eye disproportionately. For example, human beings and animals in drawings automatically have a lot of visual weight. If you're careful about how you place the eye-catching elements in the composition, you can ensure that every part of your drawing feels important. Although it's natural for some parts of a drawing to be a focal point, every part of the drawing needs to draw some attention.

To achieve balance, spread out the visual weight so that every part of your drawing attracts the eye. For example, if you notice that you aren't really looking at the top of your drawing, create a reason for the eye to go there. You could put something like an airplane or hot air balloon in the sky, or you could use other objects in the drawing to create an eye path that gets the eye of the viewer to the sky. Something as simple as a steeple pointing into an empty expanse of sky can give the sky visual weight. (See the earlier section "Using lines to your advantage" for more details on creating an eye path through your drawing.) Don't worry if a single object has more visual weight than any other thing as long as you balance it with other objects that are still interesting enough to draw the eye.

Imagine that your drawing subjects are on a teeter-totter. If your subjects are the same size, you can balance them perfectly by putting them both the same distance from the center point (see Figure 5-6a for an example). On the other hand, if your objects aren't the same size, arrange them asymmetrically. For example, you can balance a tiny object with a larger one if you place the smaller one far enough away from the larger one that your eyes naturally flow to both objects.

To test whether your arrangement of two differently sized objects works, notice whether your eyes seem to get stuck on the larger one. If they do, keep moving the two objects apart on the paper. Figure 5-6b shows a woman on the right balanced by a small purse placed far to the left. Because the two subjects are far enough apart, your eyes are drawn to the small purse just as much as to the woman.



**FIGURE 5-6:**  
Balancing visual  
weight.

Kensuke Okabayashi



WARNING

Without balance, your drawings may end up visually lopsided, so don't skip over this element of composition as you plan your next drawing.

## Considering contrast: Balancing values and shapes

Compelling subjects aren't the only weighty things you need to consider when balancing your drawing. *Values* (the lights and darks in your drawing) have visual weight, too. For instance, a large dark shape in one part of your drawing can throw off the balance of the whole drawing if you don't balance it with another value shape that has substantial visual weight. In Figure 5-7, for example, the visually heavy dark shape on the far left of the drawing is balanced by the similarly visually heavy dark shape of the wine bottle on the right. *Pattern* is another element that has a lot of visual weight when included in a drawing. Imagine a checkerboard pattern. A good way to balance pattern in one part of a drawing is to include pattern in other parts of the drawing, spreading out the visual weight to achieve balance.

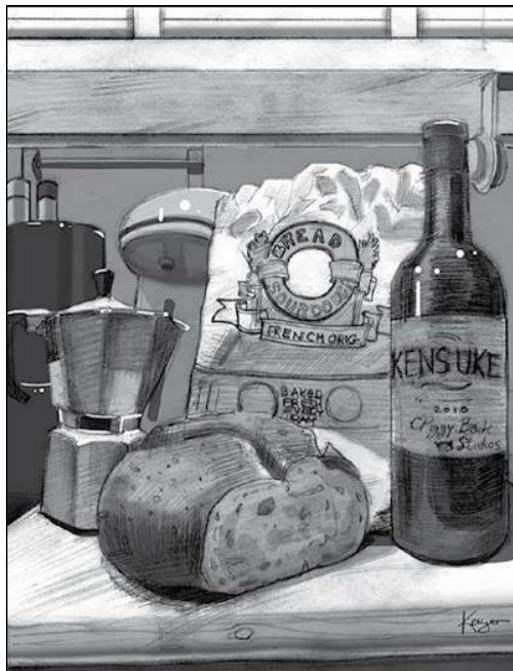


FIGURE 5-7:

Achieving balance by distributing visual weight throughout a drawing.

Kensuke Okabayashi



REMEMBER

*Contrast is more important than size when it comes to visual weight. A dark shape can draw a lot of attention to itself no matter how tiny it is, if it contrasts sharply with the rest of the drawing.*

The visual weight of the values in Figure 5-7 are balanced. The dark shadow on the bread doesn't dominate the drawing because it is balanced by the dark shapes on the left and right. Similarly, the light value on the top of the flour bag is balanced by the light value that runs along the table.

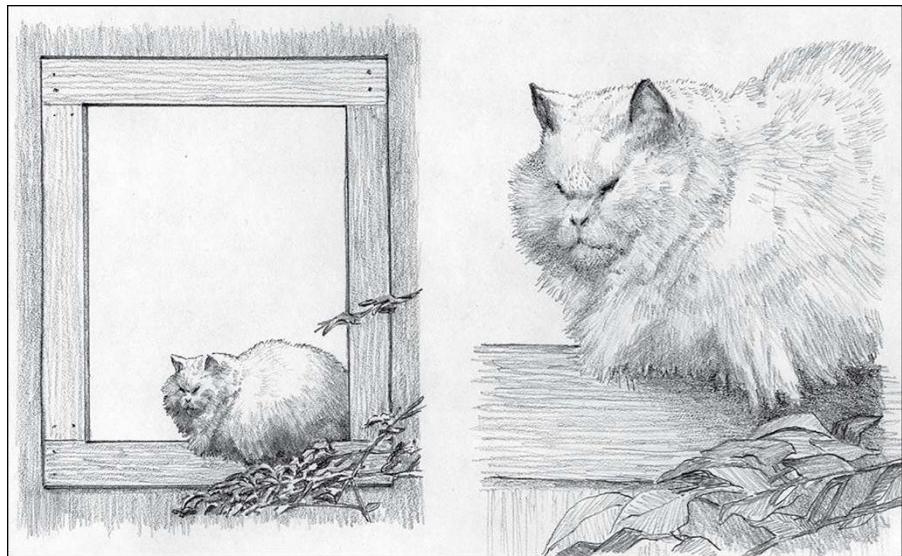
## Delegating proportions to your subjects

When you plan a drawing, you have to decide how big to make each object in the composition. The proportion of each element relative to the others depends on what you want to emphasize in your composition.

As you think about how big or small you want to make the different objects in your drawing, ask yourself the following questions:

- » **What do I consider to be the most important subject within this composition?**
- » **What kind of story do I want to tell?** In movies and television, the composition of each frame is designed to tell the audience an important part of the story. For example, when a director wants to share details about the setting, the camera zooms out to show the location. If they want to introduce a main character, the camera zooms in to frame the upper body of the character so it fills the screen.
- » **How much of my drawing format should be background (or negative shape)?** Positive and negative space must work together well in a drawing for it to look well balanced. Negative shape is often the frame around the main event. The amount of negative shape you need depends on what you're trying to do. Unless you're trying to make your subject look cramped or cropped in a drawing, leave enough negative shape around your main subject to frame it comfortably. To create a composition that feels full or empty, all you have to do is adjust the proportion of positive to negative shape accordingly. Check out Figure 5-8 for two different proportions of negative to positive shape.

**FIGURE 5-8:**  
Changing the  
amount of  
negative shape  
impacts your  
perception of the  
positive shape.



*Barbara Frake*

## Considering Basic Composition Formulas

The eye seems to prefer certain compositions over others. For example, the human eye looks longer at compositions in which the artist achieves balance by thoughtfully arranging various shapes and values. Although humans seem to find beauty in symmetry, when it comes to drawings, they tend to favor the relatively complex asymmetrical type of balance over simpler symmetrical balance.

Over the years, artists have developed some conventions of composition in response to these preferences. For example, in most landscapes, you find the horizon line positioned either one-third or two-thirds of the way down from the top of the composition. You hardly ever see a landscape in which the horizon line is placed halfway down from the top of the composition.

In this section, I introduce you to a few traditional composition formulas that can help guide you as you produce your first few drawings. Don't think of these formulas as strict rules that you must follow in every drawing. Instead, think of them as guidelines that can help you organize the basic elements of composition that I explain in the earlier section "Focusing on the Elements of Composition."

## The rule of thirds

The *rule of thirds* is a composition formula that you can follow by first dividing your drawing space into thirds both vertically and horizontally (using actual or imagined lines). With this formula, you create balance in your composition by placing the focal points in your drawing along these lines, particularly at the points where those lines intersect. The rule of thirds isn't an unbreakable law that you should never cross, but it is a great and reliable tool that can help you create balance in your drawings.



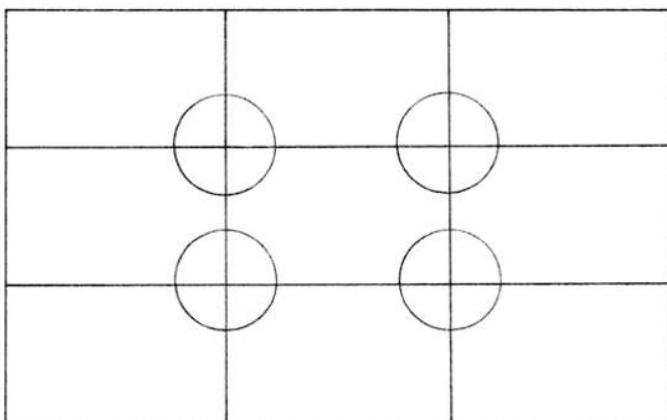
SKETCHBOOK

To start planning a composition using the rule of thirds, you simply divide your drawing surface into thirds. To see what I mean, grab your sketchbook, HB pencil, and a ruler and follow these steps:

- 1. Use your ruler and HB pencil to draw a horizontal rectangle on your paper.**  
Your rectangle can be any size; it represents your drawing space.
- 2. Use your ruler to divide the rectangle into three equal sections vertically.**
- 3. Use your ruler to divide the rectangle into three equal sections horizontally.**

Look at the four points where the lines you drew in Steps 2 and 3 intersect in Figure 5-9 (they have circles around them). Any one of these points makes a great place for a focal point.

Using the grid-like rule of thirds to make decisions about placing focal points is an effective way to achieve balance in your compositions.



**FIGURE 5-9:**  
Pinpointing great  
focal point  
locations.

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## Compositions with S-O-U-L

Four of the most popular composition formulas are named after letters of the alphabet. Each of these formulas is named after the shape of the eye path that makes up its defining feature. For example, S compositions have an eye path shaped like the letter S, and O compositions have an eye path shaped like the letter O. Each formula is useful for creating a complete, balanced composition, and each one has a unique set of qualities that you can use to help you tell your subject's story.



REMEMBER

Good compositions tell a story about your subject matter. No matter how simple your story is, aim to make compositional choices (like where to place your focal points and eye path) that best express your story.

### "S" composition

In an S composition, the subjects form a shape similar to the letter S. This composition formula reflects fluidity. The curves of pathways, rivers, or lines of trees work well in this composition. Figure 5-10 shows an example of the S composition; notice how it seems to invite the viewer into the drawing.



**FIGURE 5-10:**  
S compositions  
are characterized  
by fluidity.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

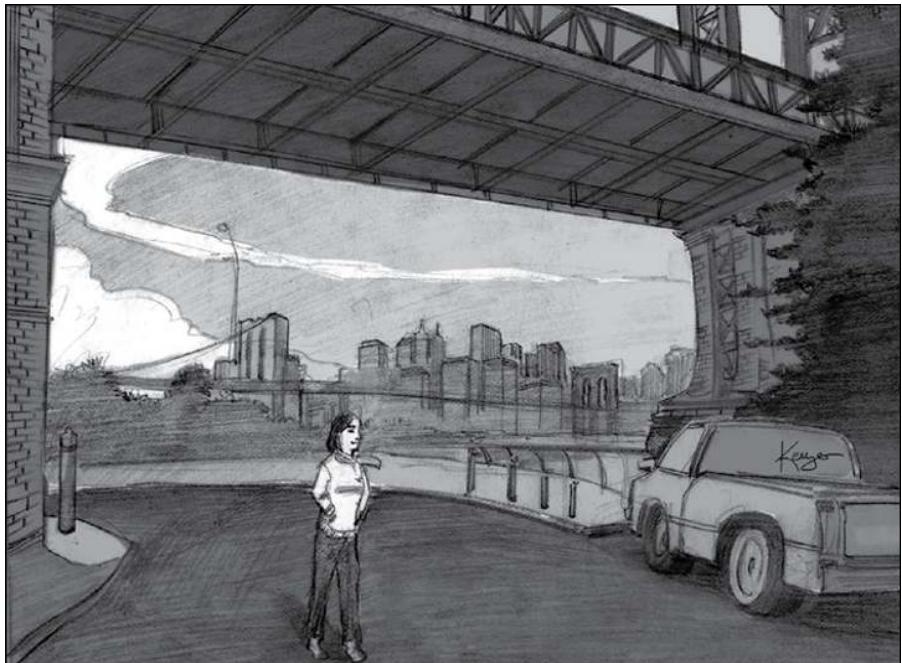
## "O" composition

In an O composition, the objects form a kind of O shape on the paper (see Figure 5-11 for an example). The circular movement of the O keeps the viewer's eyes inside the drawing.



TIP

The opening of an O composition is a good place to draw your focal points. To find the perfect place for your focal points, draw several objects, value masses, and/or lines to form your O. Then place your focal points within that circle. In Figure 5-11, the woman is the primary focal point, and the truck is the secondary focal point.



**FIGURE 5-11:**  
O compositions  
keep the viewer's  
eyes inside the  
drawing.

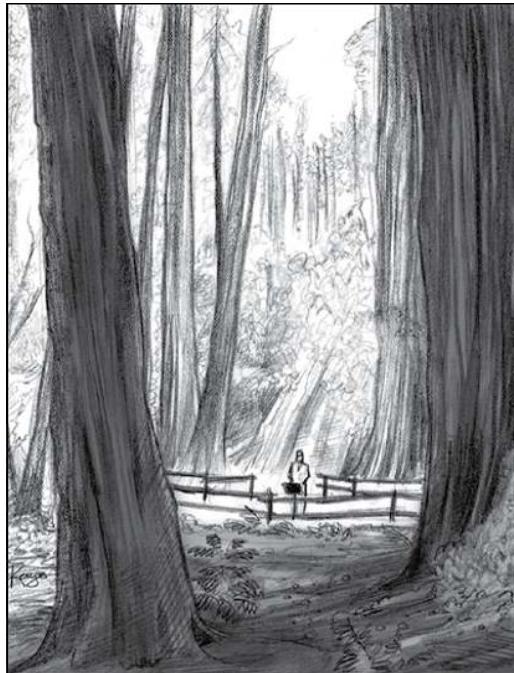
Kensuke Okabayashi

## "U" composition

The dynamic U composition usually has vertical objects or masses on either side of the drawing space with a horizontal line forming the bottom of the U shape (see Figure 5-12 for an example). The area within the U can either be negative space or another major contrast to the activity of the U. Either way, the space within the U is a good location for your drawing's focal point.

Figure 5-12 shows how you can turn a subject into a focal point by using the *U* shape to frame the subject. Although the person standing behind the fence is small and somewhat indistinct because of the distance, your eye is drawn to them.

**FIGURE 5-12:**  
*U* compositions  
create an ideal  
location for a  
focal point.

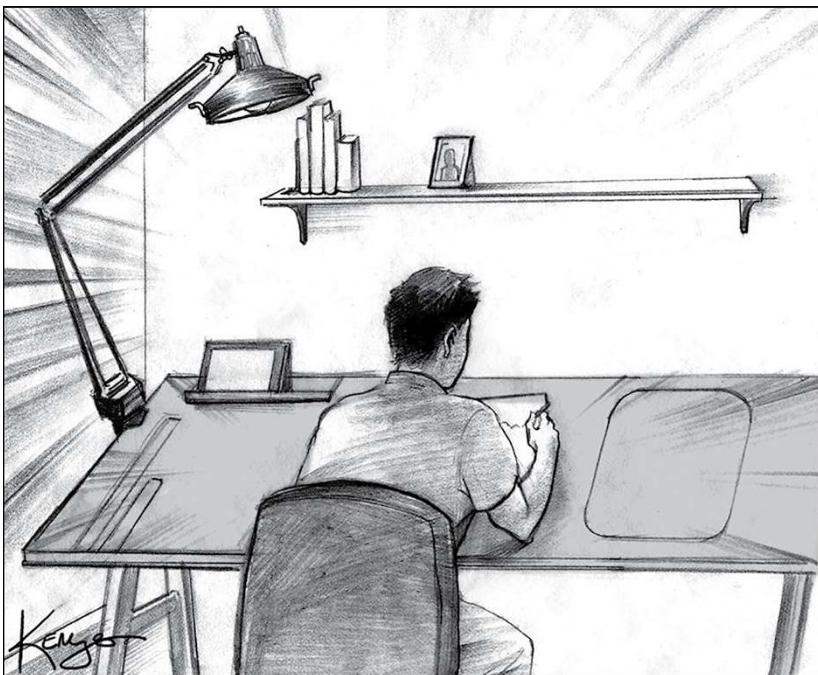


*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## **"L"** composition

You can create an *L* composition by placing a vertical mass on one side of your drawing and balancing it with an open area or distance on the other side and a horizontal base at the bottom (see Figure 5-13). This dramatic and solid composition firmly anchors your subjects and draws the attention of the viewer both vertically and horizontally.

The open area in this composition can provide a great frame for your focal point. Or you can choose to make your focal point the vertical mass of the *L*, which the artist has done in Figure 5-13.



**FIGURE 5-13:**  
*L* compositions  
draw attention  
vertically and  
horizontally.

Kensuke Okabayashi

## Using a Few Drawing Tools to Plan Your Compositions

As you plan your drawings, you have the option of drawing your subjects exactly as you see them or using your artistic license to represent your subjects in a way that's completely different from how they actually look. Even if you decide to draw your subjects with something other than real life in mind, it'll still be helpful to take some time to plan your composition. By considering the elements I cover in the earlier section "Focusing on the Elements of Composition" and by using some of the drawing tools I describe in the following sections, you can plan strong compositions for all your drawings.

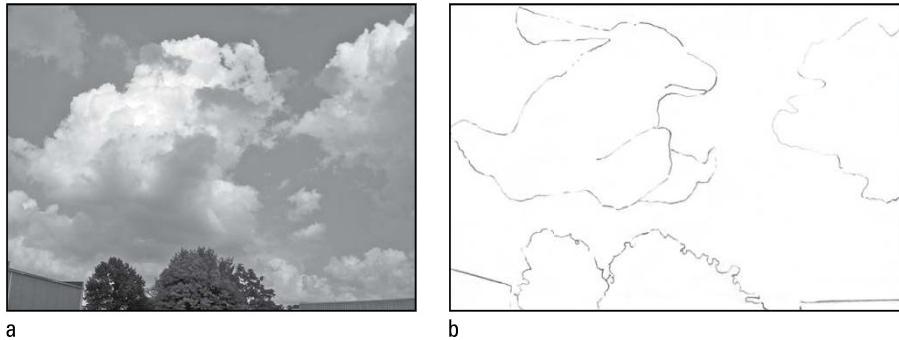


REMEMBER

If you ever find a subject you'd love to draw but you don't like the background, you don't have to give up on it. Call on your artistic license and give it the background you wish it had.

In Figure 5-14, you see a drawing in which the artist used artistic license to make a real-life scene look a little more whimsical. When the artist looked at the cloudy scene in Figure 5-14a, she thought the cloud on the left looked a lot like a dog. To show this perception in the drawing in Figure 5-14b, she altered the composition by replacing the cloud shape with the shape of a dog.

**FIGURE 5-14:**  
Using artistic  
license to make  
imaginative  
drawings from  
real-life subjects.



Jamie Combs

## Choosing your composition by framing the subject

A *viewfinder frame* is a simple drawing tool you can use to help you filter out some of the world’s distractions so that you can more easily find and plan strong compositions. As an added bonus, the viewfinder frame lets you test-drive hundreds of compositions without even picking up a pencil: You simply hold up the frame, look through it at the scene you’re thinking about drawing, and move it around (like you do when you look through the lens of a camera) until you see an ideal composition.

To make your own viewfinder frame, gather together some lightweight cardboard, scissors or a box cutter, and two large paper clips. Then follow these steps:

1. **Cut out two identical L-shaped pieces of cardboard, any width you want (see Figure 5-15a).**

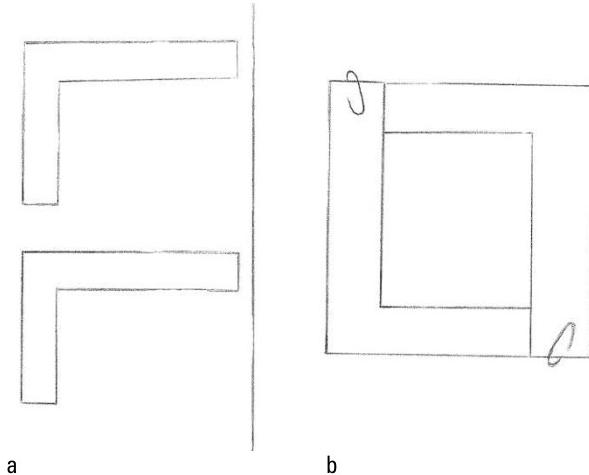
The wider you make the L-shaped pieces, the sturdier your viewfinder will be.

2. **Use two large paper clips to join the pieces of cardboard together to form a frame (see Figure 5-15b).**

You can easily adjust the size of the frame to make it proportionate to your drawing paper.

After you make your frame, look at your subject through the frame to choose an ideal composition for your drawing (refer to Figure 5-15b). Test the horizontal and vertical possibilities by changing the orientation of the frame.

**FIGURE 5-15:**  
Using a  
viewfinder  
frame to plan  
the perfect  
composition.



*Jamie Combs*

## Planning a composition from a photograph

Photography allows you to capture a composition that you want to draw, take it back to your drawing space, and work on it for hours or days until you get it just the way you want it. When you work from a photograph, you can copy it as is or you can use it as a reference for a drawing that is based on the photo but not an exact copy.



SKETCHBOOK

One way to copy information from a photograph (or any other image, for that matter) is to use a grid. You can use a simple grid as a tool to help you create a precise copy that can be scaled up or down. All you have to do is grab your sketchbook, photo, pen, HB pencil, and ruler and follow these steps:

### 1. Use a pen and ruler to draw a grid of squares on your photograph.

If your subject and photo are fairly simple, use larger squares. If your photo is highly detailed, you may want to use a lot of small squares.



TIP

Draw the grid on your photo (or a photocopy, if you don't want to ruin the original) with an ordinary ballpoint pen. It doesn't smudge as easily as a marker and can be seen more clearly than a pencil. Use your ruler to keep everything straight and tidy.

2. Label the horizontal rows of squares down the side of your photo with letters and label the vertical rows of squares across the top of your photo with numbers.

That way, you can easily keep track of which square you're working on as you transfer the visual information from the photo to your drawing surface.

3. Use a ruler and HB pencil to lay out the grid on your drawing surface.

Draw the lines lightly so that you don't indent your drawing surface and can eventually erase the grid lines without tearing up the paper.



TIP

When you want your drawing to be larger than your photo, but still an exact copy, draw the grid on your drawing paper proportionately. For example, if your photo is 4 x 6 inches, you can multiply both sides by two to find dimensions for a drawing that's twice the size of the photo but still proportionately equivalent. You can make your copy as big as you want. As long as you multiply both dimensions of the photo by the same number, the proportions of the enlargement will be equal to those of the photo.

4. Outside the perimeter of your drawing space, label the horizontal and vertical rows of squares to correspond to the labels you marked on your photo in Step 2.

Marking the same labels on both your photo and your drawing space makes transferring the visual information from the photo to your drawing surface much easier.

5. Draw the shapes and values you see in each square of your photo in the corresponding square on your drawing surface.

Focusing on the shapes and values makes it easier to forget about what you know and draw what you actually see.

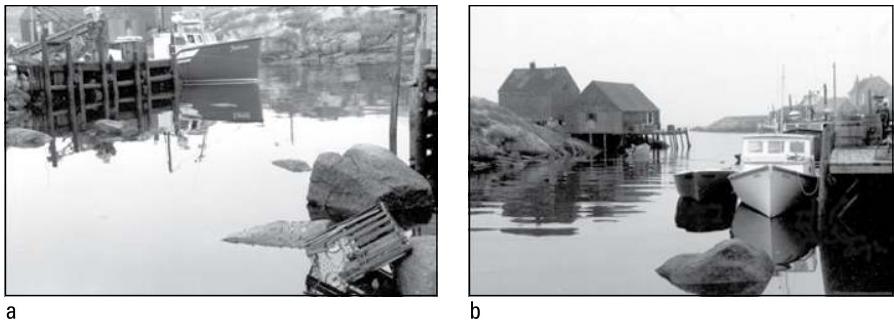
6. Check the positioning of everything you drew in each square to make sure your drawing matches the photo; then erase your grid lines.

## Project: Planning a Composition from More than One Source Image

In this project, I walk you through the process of planning a composition, from its inspiration (two separate photos) to its completion as an original drawing. Take a look at Figure 5-16 and consider the following problems that you learn how to resolve with the project in this section:

- » You have two photos that you like, but you aren't fond of the composition in either. You're looking for a balanced and flowing alternative.
- » Each photo contains too many focal points, and you want to find a way to eliminate some of the clutter.
- » The broken and abandoned lobster trap in the lower-right corner of Figure 5-16a is a fun and interesting object, and you want to find a way to make it the primary focal point.

**FIGURE 5-16:**  
Combining the best parts of two images into one harmonious composition.



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SKETCHBOOK

To do this project, first find two photos you want to combine into one. Then grab your sketchbook, 2H, 2B, 4B, and 6B pencils, ruler, kneaded eraser, and vinyl eraser and follow these steps.

**Note:** Use whichever composition formula works best for your photo(s); I use an *S* composition to combine the photos in Figure 5-16 (see the earlier section “Considering Basic Composition Formulas” for more details).

- 1. Using your 2H pencil, roughly sketch the basic composition you want to use for your drawing.**

The artist of Figure 5-17 chose to use an *S* composition. She drew a loose, tapering *S* shape to create the foundation for the drawing's eye path and to represent the water from the photos in Figure 5-16.

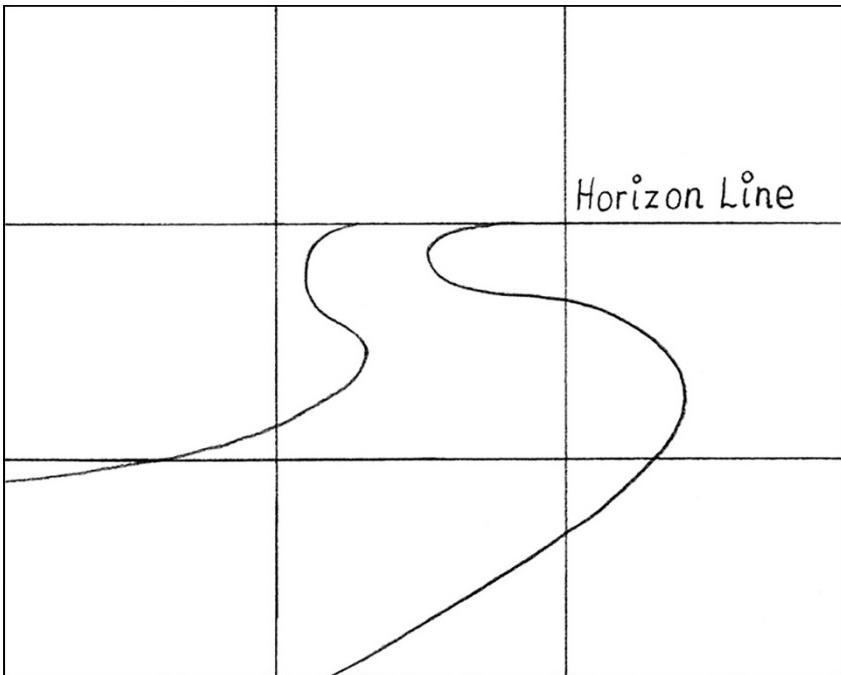
- 2. Using your 2H pencil and ruler, draw lines to divide the drawing space into thirds; do so both horizontally and vertically (see Figure 5-18).**

The four places where your lines intersect are ideal locations for primary and secondary focal points. Notice that the artist of Figure 5-18 has chosen the upper horizontal line to be the horizon line.



**FIGURE 5-17:**  
Sketching the  
basic  
composition.

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**FIGURE 5-18:**  
Dividing the  
drawing space  
into thirds  
horizontally and  
vertically.

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**3. Decide which elements of your photo(s) to include in your drawing, what to leave out, and where to put everything.**



TIP

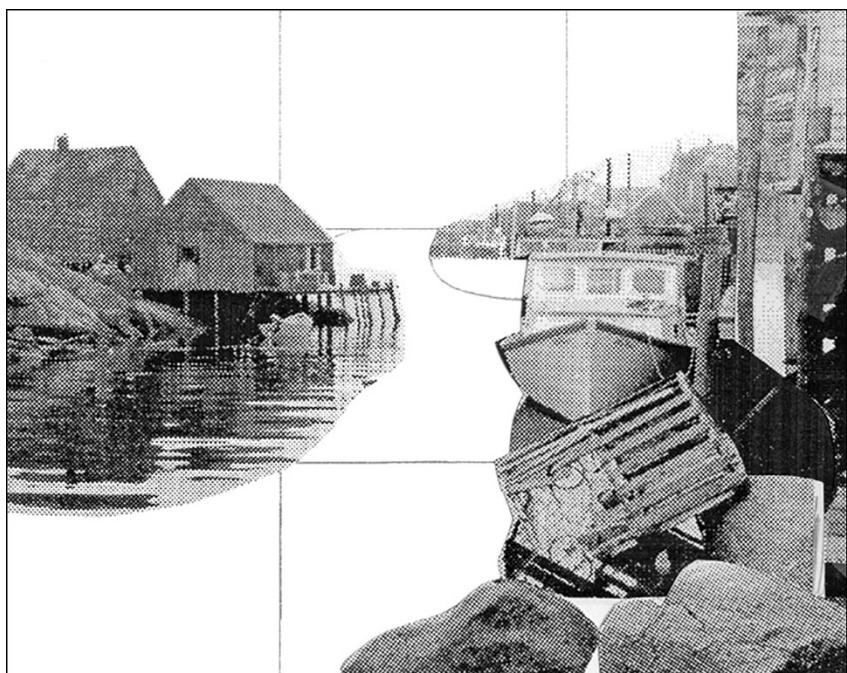
To help you decide which elements you want to use and where you want to place them, make a photo collage to plan your composition. If you have access to image-editing software, you can do this digitally; otherwise, grab your scissors and some tape. Print your photo(s) in two or three different sizes. On a separate piece of paper, use your ruler and 2H pencil to draw a rectangle

the same size and shape you want your drawing to be. Cut out the parts you like from the photocopies in the sizes that best fit your artistic design. Choose a good place for your focal point(s) on the rectangle you just drew and then arrange the other photo pieces around your focal point(s) until they fit nicely within your composition. As you arrange your photo pieces, tape them in place on the rectangle.

See the cut and taped plan in Figure 5-19 for an example. The focal point is located on the lower-right point of the intersecting lines of the rule of thirds. The artist moved a couple of the big rocks from the photos to the front of the lobster trap to add dimension to the drawing. This preliminary composition looks pretty good, but the boat spoils the S shape and has to go! The artist removed it from the drawing plan.

**4. Using your 2H pencil, lightly sketch the outlines of the focal point, the secondary focal points, the foreground, the middle ground, and the distant space in your sketchbook.**

In Figure 5-19, the lobster trap is the focal point, the rocks around it are the secondary focal points, the lower-right corner is the foreground, the fishing shacks and wharf on the left are the middle ground, and the land and buildings in the background are the distant space.

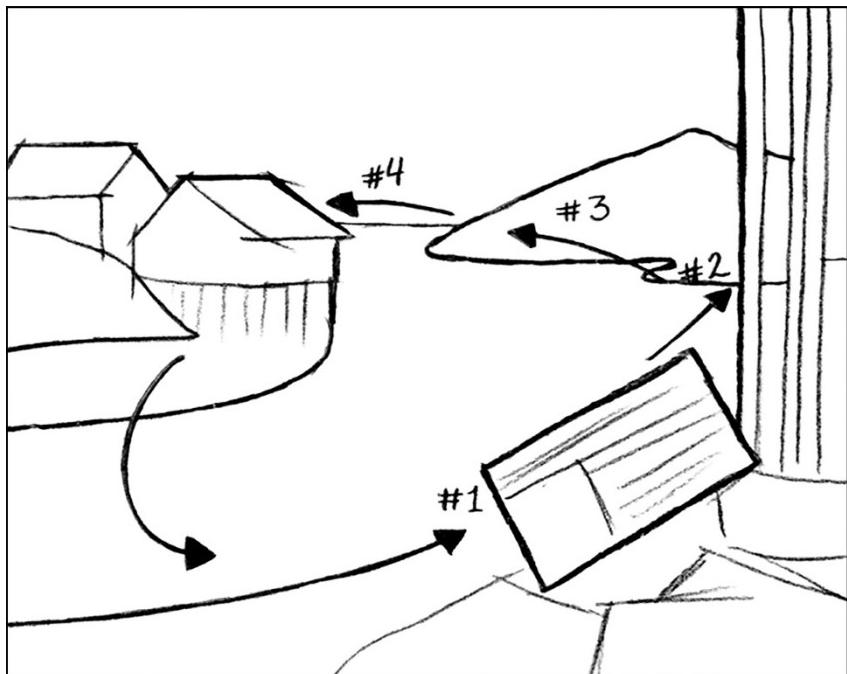


**FIGURE 5-19:**  
Using a photo collage as a plan  
for your drawing.

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**5. Examine the flow of your composition and make sure that everything looks the way you want it to look.**

In Figure 5-20, the lobster trap (#1) is the focal point. The viewer's eyes naturally enter this S composition from the lower left and move directly toward the lobster trap. The tops of the rocks in front of the lobster trap are sort of shaped like rounded arrow points, navigating the viewer's eyes upward. The upper-right corner of the lobster trap serves as a sharp arrow point, clearly directing the viewer's eyes upward and to the right, where you see the edge of a building.



**FIGURE 5-20:**  
Rough sketch of  
the composition.

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The edge of the building (#2) serves as a *stopper*, meaning that it stops the eyes from moving farther to the right and possibly exiting the composition altogether. Thanks to another stopper, a horizontal board jutting out from the edge of the building (to be added later), the viewer's eyes don't exit the composition as they move upward either.

The end of the section of land (#3) to the left of the building is shaped like another point of an arrow and is pointing directly toward the fishing shacks on the right side of the composition.

The fishing shacks (#4) are detailed enough to offer the viewer's eyes a place to rest for a second. To keep the viewer's eyes inside the composition, rather than exiting to the far left, the artist emphasizes the ripples and reflections in the water, navigating the viewer's eyes downward and back toward the lobster trap and completing a full-circled composition.

6. When you think the composition looks the way you want it to look, use your kneaded eraser to lighten all the lines of your sketch; then switch to your 2B pencil to refine the contours of the objects in the drawing (see Figure 5-21).



**FIGURE 5-21:**  
Adding more details to direct the viewer's eye around the composition.

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7. Use your 2B, 4B, and 6B pencils to add shading to your drawing (see Figure 5-22).

Choose any shading technique you prefer. See Chapter 8 for more information on shading techniques. Notice that the darkest values are in and around the primary focal point (the lobster trap in Figure 5-22). The other values, from lights to darks, are on both sides of the drawing, distributing their weights evenly so as to create a balance of values throughout the composition.



**FIGURE 5-22:**  
The finished  
drawing.

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#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Using line as a tool for actively seeing
- » Considering the versatility of line
- » Breaking objects into simple shapes
- » Drawing gestures
- » Measuring proportions
- » Putting your line and shape drawing skills to the test with a simple project

## Chapter 6

# Seeing and Drawing Lines and Shapes

In this chapter, the information is geared toward sharing tools for use in observational drawing. You can still get something out of it if you want to work primarily from your imagination. For example, I talk about line and how you can use different types of line. The section on breaking objects into shapes can also be helpful if think about how to reverse the instructions to construct objects from simple shapes.

Regarding observational drawing, I talk about how you can use line and shape to make sense of what you see so you can draw it. I walk you through a process for using line to map out size, shape, and direction. I talk about simplifying complicated forms into shapes and show you how to check proportions so you can make accurate size relationships. The exercises included here challenge you to zoom in and examine an object's specific contours and then zoom out and look for the simple shapes that comprise an object.

# Getting Comfortable with Lines

The *line* is the basic unit of drawing, the way flour is a basic unit of baking. There are different kinds for different uses. (There are some drawing scenarios where you don't use line at all!) Another way drawing is similar to baking is that you may think you already know what you like, but it can be fun to experiment.

When you draw, you make a physical connection with line. Your body acts out the lines you make as you make them. Try making some carefree doodles right now. Pay attention to the way your hand moves with the same rhythm and direction as the marks you make. Sometimes your whole arm and, if your drawing is big enough, even whole body get involved when you make lines in your drawing.

To see what I mean, imagine drawing a skyscraper. The sides of the building go up and down, so your arm moves up and down to describe them. Do windows march across the side of the skyscraper? Your arm and hand have to move sideways to describe the tops and bottoms of the windows.

Once you understand the eye/body/hand connection in drawing, you can take this connection to the next level. Try this now: Look up at an object across the room from you. Point your index finger at the object and move your hand so your pointer finger "traces" the outline of the object. When you do this, your hand and eye move together. Now imagine what might happen if you did this again with the same object but with a pencil in your hand and instead of pointing at the object in the air your pencil was touching the paper. If you can still sync up the movement of your hand and eye, you can make a drawing of the object while you look at it.

*Blind contour drawing* is a method of drawing where you can test this idea. It's called blind contour because you draw without looking at your paper. The whole time you're drawing, you look only at your drawing subject. To do this type of drawing, you have to synchronize the movements of your hand with the movements of your eyes. When you coordinate the movement of your eye with your drawing hand, your total focus on the subject allows you to discover the *contours* (the exterior and interior edges) of your subject in a way nothing else does. At first, blind contour drawing may be uncomfortable. With practice it will get more comfortable.



SKETCHBOOK

This exercise gives you some practice with blind contour drawing. After you find your starting point on the paper, you don't look at the paper again until you're finished with your drawing. Don't worry about making a perfect drawing because you can't make a perfect drawing using this method. Choose a time and place where you can work without interruptions and get ready to focus your complete attention on the contours of your drawing subject. Gather your sketchbook, some tape, and any pencil. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Tape a sheet of drawing paper to your drawing surface so that the paper doesn't move as you draw.**
- 2. Find a simple object to draw and place it in front of you.**

You can use any object you want, even your own hand.

If you're right-handed, place the object in front of you on your far left, and if you're left-handed, place it in front of you on your far right.

- 3. Face the object, sit in a comfortable position with your drawing surface below your eye level, and rest your drawing arm on the table.**
- 4. Choose one point on your object to use as a starting point. Close one eye (optional).**

Closing one is not required to do this exercise. If it's uncomfortable for you, don't do it. The reason for closing one eye is that it cuts out the double vision that can happen if you try to stare at a single point with both eyes at the same time.

- 5. Place the point of your pencil in a corresponding spot on your drawing surface, and then look back at the object.**

For the rest of this exercise, resist the urge to look at your drawing's progress. No cheating!

- 6. Slowly move your eye along the contours of your object; at the same time, move your pencil very slowly, following along with the movement of your eyes.**



TIP

Try to forget about the paper. Imagine that your pencil is actually drawing on your subject. Keep your eyes and pencil moving together at the same slow, steady pace. Don't take your pencil off the paper as you draw. If you do, you may get lost!

Carefully notice each time the line on the edge of the object changes direction. Without peeking at your paper, allow your pencil to record every detail of the line (or lines) you see on your subject.

- 7. Continue drawing and looking at your subject until your eyes return to the place where you began your drawing.**

You may want to repeat this exercise (with the same object or different objects) several times. Don't worry if you accidentally look at the paper as you draw; just redirect your focus to the subject and keep drawing. Although you may be uncomfortable drawing without looking at first, the more practice you get drawing this way, the more comfortable it'll become.

Synchronizing your hand with the movements of your eyes allows you to see your subject in a deeper way. Pay attention to what you observe.

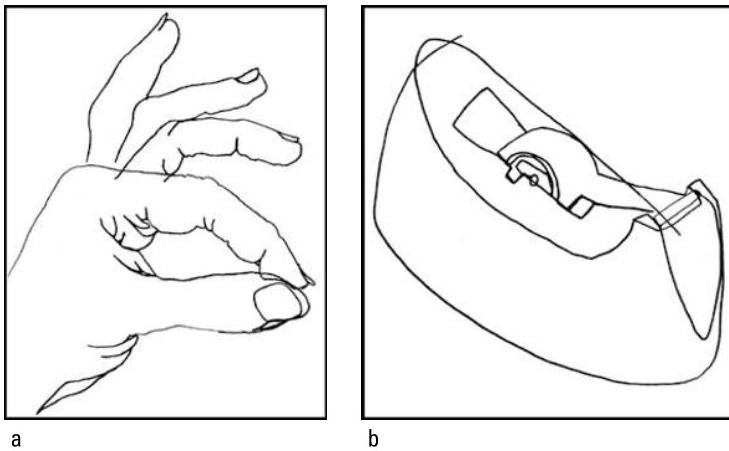


REMEMBER

The process you use to create your blind contour drawings is more important than what the final drawings look like. The results might be surprising and even a little comical, but the things you learn about hand eye coordination are more than worth the price of admission. When you practice blind contour drawing, you are training yourself to look more at what you really see.

Figure 6-1 shows two drawings created using this blind contour drawing technique.

**FIGURE 6-1:**  
Using blind  
contour drawing  
to draw two  
simple objects.



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## Appreciating Diversity in Lines

The characteristics of lines in drawings vary as wildly as the artists who use them. The character of lines add to the meaning of a drawing. For example, imagine you're getting ready to make a drawing of your television. Your drawing will have a different feel if you use only curved lines or only straight ones.



REMEMBER

Lines can be curved or straight and coarse or fine, light or dark, bold or tentative. You can fill a whole page with words describing lines. The variety of lines you can make enables you to represent anything you can see or imagine.

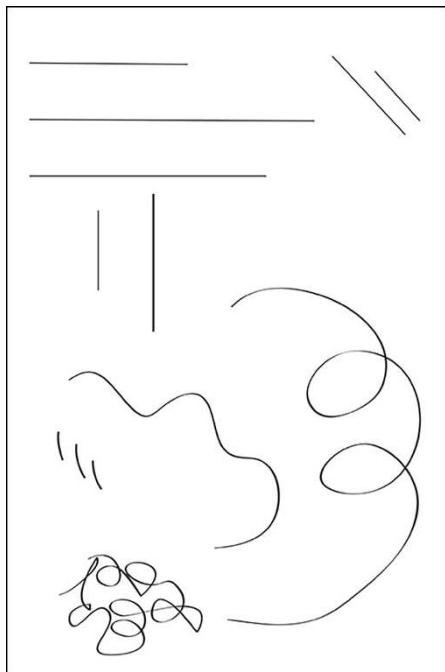
Lines carry emotive value. You can use lines purposely to communicate something beyond a visual description of your subject matter. Some types of lines come pre-loaded with expressive effects. Curved lines, for example, automatically evoke different emotions than straight lines.

Whenever you see drawings, look carefully at the lines used to make them. Mentally catalog the different types of lines you see. Better yet, when you notice a novel use of line, grab your sketchbook and jot it down. Make a note about any emotional or expressive effect they convey. Try injecting some of those lines into your own drawing.

The choices you make about lines when you're drawing will probably be intuitive at times and at other times calculated to create a specific effect. In this section, I explain the character and function of lines that are straight, angular, and curved so that you can put words to the way that lines you use impact your drawings. Figure 6-2 shows a random sampling of different types of lines that are useful for drawing. Keep in mind that these are only a few types of lines you can use in your drawings; you're sure to find many more as you continue drawing.



After reading about the different kinds of lines in this section, take a few moments to look around you. See how many different types of lines you can find in real world objects. Try combining different types of lines to draw an object or a doodle. Don't worry about how the drawing looks. Simply experiment with combining different types of lines.



**FIGURE 6-2:**  
A variety of  
straight, angular,  
and curved lines.

*Jamie Combs*

# Lining up straight lines

Straight lines can be thick or thin, long or short, and drawn in any direction. Depending on these qualities, straight lines can illustrate different concepts and emotions in drawings. A thick, straight line makes a statement of boldness and strength. A thinner straight line suggests minimalism and precision. The length of a straight line impacts the energetic rhythm of a drawing. Shorter lines imply change the way quick, bright sounds do in music. Longer lines have more gravity.

The orientation of a straight line has its own things to say:

- » **Horizontal:** Horizontal lines (lines that are parallel to the top and bottom edges of rectangular paper) reflect stability and calm.
- » **Vertical:** Vertical lines (Lines that are straight up and down) reflect strength, grandeur, and dignity.
- » **Diagonal:** Diagonal lines (lines that slant at various angles) reflect a sense of movement and change.



SKETCHBOOK

Being able to sketch a relatively straight line freehand is a good skill to cultivate. Although drawing straight lines freehand isn't easy, with practice, you can master this skill. Grab any pencil and sketchbook and follow these three easy steps:

1. **Draw one dot on your paper where you want your straight line to begin and another dot where you want it to end.**
2. **Imagine a straight line connecting these two dots.**
3. **Connect the dots with your pencil.**  
Keep your wrist still and draw from your shoulder or elbow.
4. **Experiment with speed. What happens when you try to draw a straight line quickly? How about slowly?**



TIP

You can draw a straight line in one continuous movement or a series of overlapping strokes. Practice both methods several times to find out which one is most comfortable for you.

If you need to draw truly straight lines, there is no shame in using a ruler. Lines drawn with a ruler have a different character than lines drawn without. They don't always work well together in a drawing. Before you get your ruler out, decide what you're after. If you are making a drawing that incorporates architecture, for example, consider what your purpose is. Ask yourself if you need to have crisp, precise lines where only a ruler will do or if you're making a drawing where evidence of the fallible human hand are welcome.

## Cutting corners with angled lines

*Angled lines* are basically just diagonal straight lines. So, why talk about them? When you draw a line that deviates from the straight-up-and-down vertical or the straight-across horizontal, you are dealing with a line that sits at a particular angle. If your drawing is non-representational or even imaginary, you don't need to worry about this. If you are drawing from life, thinking about a diagonal line as an angle is helpful for drawing.

For example, let's say you are sitting on a bench at the bus stop, trying to draw a stop sign you see, when you notice that the post of the stop sign is not straight-up-and-down. In this case, you draw the post correctly if you think about the slanting post as a line at a particular angle. The first thing you want to do is think about whether the angle leans left or right. Next imagine a 45-degree angle in your mind and compare the angle you see to that. You can ask yourself, "Is this angle more or less than 45 degrees? And is it closer to vertical or closer to horizontal?" This give you a better shot at drawing the angle correctly the first time.

## Following the flow of curved lines

*Curved lines* are simply straight lines that bend or curve. Curved lines can be fast or slow, calm or frenetic, heavy or light. They can be as regular as a hill or circle or they can even change directions, creating an S- or ribbon-candy-like configuration, called a compound curve. Common examples of curved lines include the letters C, U, and S.

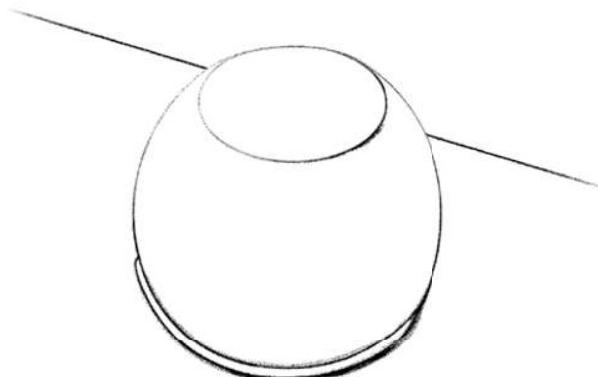
A curved line becomes a circular shape when the ends meet. You can use curved lines to draw highly believable round objects, particularly when you pay attention to the weight, or thickness, of the lines. (See the later section "Breaking objects into simple shapes" and Chapters 4 and 7 for more details on drawing rounded volumes and other shapes.)

Whenever you see a realistic line drawing of a rounded object, the reason the illusion works is you can see the way light plays across the object. A form that swells toward you catches the light differently in different spots. You don't have to use shading to show this play of light. You can use variations in line weight.

So how do you know when you need heavier versus lighter line weight? The object shows you. To see how this works, find any rounded object, such as an inverted mixing bowl, as shown in Figure 6-3. Look closely at the contours of the object. You'll probably notice that some areas of the edges look lighter, and some of them look darker.

When you're drawing a rounded object using curved lines, pay attention to the parts of the object that are lighter and darker. Adjust the weight of your lines to compensate for the differences in lightness and darkness you see. When you use vary the weight of lines in your drawings, you tell the viewer's eye how to interpret the drawing.

Figure 6-3 shows an example of how curved lines combine with line weight variation to create believable drawings of objects. Because of the way lines work in this drawing, when you look at the bowl, you can imagine what it would feel like to touch it.



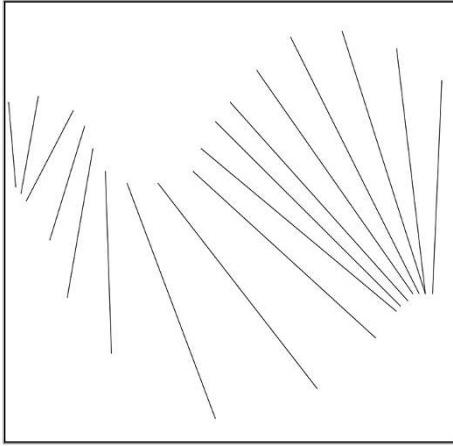
**FIGURE 6-3:**  
Combining  
line-weight  
variation with  
curved lines to  
describe a  
believable  
inverted mixing  
bowl.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*



You can also make a curved line (or a curved shape) out of straight lines put together in a purposeful way. Building curved forms with straight lines adds a sense of mechanical rhythm to curved forms that can be visually interesting.

Figure 6-4 shows you how to make a curve out of straight lines. Notice that the way the artist arranged the various lengths of lines is very important to creating the curved shape you see in the figure. If you want to try this, lightly sketch the curved shape you want to make first and then use that as a guideline for fitting your straight lines into. When you're done, you can use your kneaded eraser to get rid of the guidelines.



**FIGURE 6-4:**  
Drawing curves  
using angled  
lines.

## Capturing Gesture

The word *gesture* in drawing is used to describe something similar to and different than the way we use it in the rest of our lives. A gesture can be something someone does to communicate, like when you wave to a friend to say hello. It can be a kind or courteous deed, like when someone brings you a cookie and you say, “what a lovely gesture.”

In the context of drawing, *gesture* still refers to what something does, but in this case, the “something it does” is take up space in a particular way. A tall narrow tree takes up space by standing tall and narrow. That is its *gesture*. In order to draw the tree’s *gesture*, you focus using line to record tallness and narrowness.

Every object, whether it’s animate or inanimate, has *gesture*, so it’s important that you know how to represent *gesture* in your drawings. You can do so through simple *gesture* drawings, which are bare-bone drawings that capture “what something does” rather than the way something looks. Beginning any drawing with a *gesture* drawing is extremely helpful because you work out what something does before you worry about what it looks like. You can use a *gesture* drawing like an armature to build your drawing on.

To make a *gesture* drawing, follow these steps:

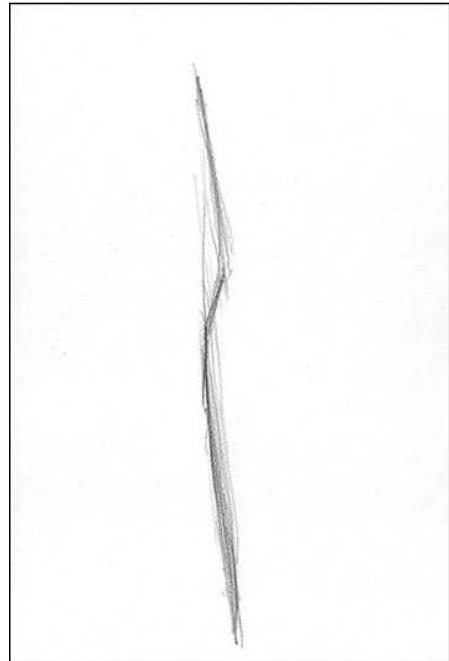
- 1. Set up your paper so you can comfortably see your subject.**
- 2. Set a timer for one or two minutes.**

### **3. Find and quickly draw the axis of the object.**

With your eyes trained firmly on your subject, imagine a line, or *axis*, running through the center of the longest side of your object; draw that imaginary line on your paper while keeping your eye on the subject (see Figure 6-5).

Don't look at the paper as you draw! Imagine that you're actually drawing on the subject.

**FIGURE 6-5:**  
Search for and  
draw the  
imaginary axis of  
the longest  
dimension of  
your drawing  
subject.



*Jamie Combs*

### **4. Locate and quickly draw any secondary axes.**

A secondary axis attaches to the main axis. For example, the primary axis of a human body is usually the one running through the torso. One secondary axis is the imaginary line connecting the shoulders. Another is the imaginary line connecting the hips.

### **5. Find and quickly draw the axis line for any additional segments of your object.**

Using the human body as an example again, the head and each half of each limb has an axis that is independent of any other part. As you create a network of axes, you will see you are creating a skeleton-like version of your subject (see Figure 6-6).

These extra lines can be diagonal, horizontal, or vertical.



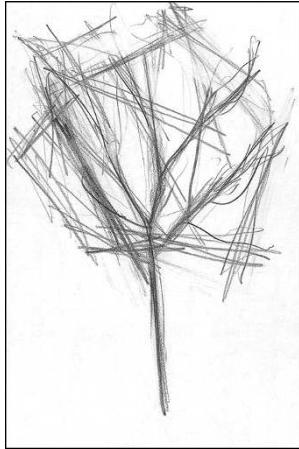
**FIGURE 6-6:**  
Build a skeletal representation of the object.

*Jamie Combs*

## 6. Look for and rapidly draw the simple shapes of your object.

With quick, circular motions, draw any rounded volumes that are part of your object (see Figure 6-7). If your object has rectangular shapes, you can do the same thing using straight lines.

Keep your eyes on the subject as you draw! Although you'll likely make a mess by not looking at the paper as you draw, you'll understand your subject much more completely because you remained focused on it the entire time you were drawing. With time, you can retrain your hand to move in time with your eyes.



**FIGURE 6-7:**  
Draw the simple shapes that make up the body of your object.

*Jamie Combs*

7. Finally, as time allows, check your work by going back to the first decision (the main axis line) and trying it again. Do this right on top of the drawing you already made.

You can also retry any secondary axis or simple shape. Sometimes when you do a gesture drawing, your hand and eye won't sync up exactly the first time through. Going back over it will help you refine your search for gesture.

*Gesture drawing* is a way of learning about what your drawing subject does in space. Look rapidly up, down, side-to-side, and all round to take in the essential posture of your subject. Simultaneously, you draw rapidly, synchronizing the movements of your hand to the movement of your eyes.

As you work through each gesture drawing you make, keep in mind the following ideas:

- » **Make your gesture drawings fast and keep your eyes trained firmly on the subject.** Everything you need to know about your subject is on the subject, not on the paper. The temptation to look at your paper may be strong, but don't give in. If you find that you're looking at your paper more than at the subject, just redirect your focus and try again.
- » **Try to keep your drawing tool in contact with the paper the entire time.** Lifting your drawing tool to think about where to put it next interrupts the flow of your drawing (and makes it hard to know where to start drawing again). When you need to move from one place to another in your drawing, you may be tempted to lift your drawing tool. For example, if you're making a gesture drawing of a person and you get to a foot, it may seem like you have to lift the tool to get to the next form you need to draw. Resist! When you get to a point where you've reached the end of a form, keep your eyes on the subject and draw a line from the form you're in to the next form. Gesture drawing makes a map of how the parts of an object connect to each other. The lines you make that connect one part to another are a feature not a bug. In fact, your ability to judge spatial relationships will improve the more you're able to synchronize the movement of your hand with the movement of your eyes.
- » **Remember that your gesture drawing is a preliminary sketch.** Allow yourself some playful savagery in your pre-work; then you can focus on making your finished work look neat and accurate.
- » **Don't be afraid of messiness.** The messiness of gesture drawing comes from looking very hard at something and responding energetically with your hand and arm. Gesture drawing is a full-body attempt to understand the essential nature of a pose, and messiness is just part of the process.



REMEMBER

Gesture drawing doesn't have to be perfect. It's an exploration. Repeating the exercise multiple times helps you improve your hand-eye coordination.

## Focusing on Proportions and Shapes

One of the challenges to creating realistic drawings is achieving accurate proportions. *Proportion* refers to the size of one element in your drawing compared to the size of another element.

Achieving proportional accuracy in drawing is absolutely possible when you become familiar with a few simple strategies. This section shows you how to draw accurate proportion — both within single objects and between different objects — by using these basic strategies.

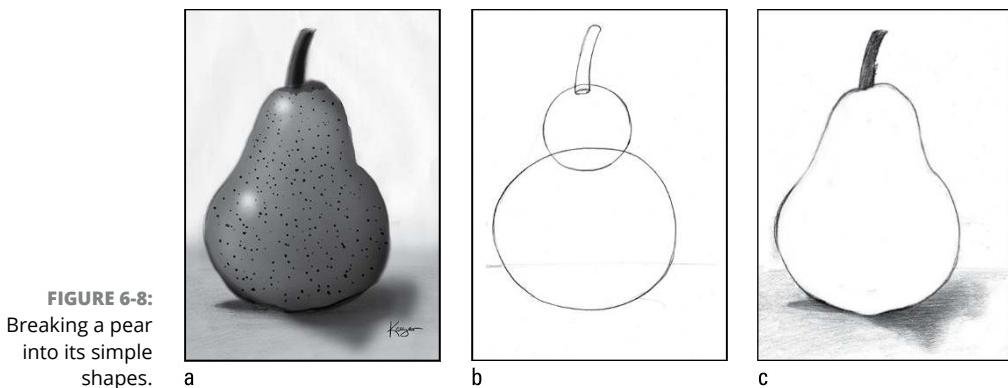
### Breaking objects into simple shapes

If you've ever tried to draw an object that's more complex than a square, you know how frustrating it can be when the two sides of something don't quite match up. The easiest way to eliminate this frustration is to break the object down into simple shapes like circles, squares, and triangles.

The lines you use to draw the simple shapes don't have to be part of the final drawing. Think of them as construction lines. Just like with gesture drawing, when you draw the simple shapes, you are creating a foundation for your drawing.

After you draw the simple shapes of an object, you build out the bulk of the body. Once you have that, you can confidently draw the contour line around the form. Then you can erase or hide the original simple shapes.

Figure 6-8 shows how you can draw a realistic-looking pear by first breaking it down into simple shapes. Look at the circles the artist used to draw the rounded volumes of the pear. They're not perfect circles because the round parts of the pear aren't perfectly round, but they are both based on the simple circle shape. Also notice that the stem of the pear is a simple rectangular shape.



**FIGURE 6-8:**  
Breaking a pear  
into its simple  
shapes.

Kensuke Okabayashi



SKETCHBOOK

This exercise shows you the step-by-step process of using simple shapes as the foundation for creating a line drawing of an object. I use a floor lamp as the subject, but you can use any object you want. Grab your sketchbook, 2H and 2B pencils, and kneaded eraser, and find an object. Then follow these steps:

**1. Determine which simple shapes make up the object.**

Keep in mind that it will be easy to identify some shapes and harder to identify others. Some parts of the object may look somewhat like a specific shape but not exactly. The shapes you use are approximations and don't have to be exact. You're constructing a foundation that you can refine. For example, you may be drawing something that looks like a circle if the circle were a little squished. That is totally okay.

**2. Use your 2H pencil (or just draw lightly) to draw the shapes you identified in Step 1 (see Figure 6-9a).**

Pay attention to the size of the shapes. If one part of the object is twice as big as another, draw the shapes to reflect their approximate size difference. Don't worry if the object looks incomplete when you're done with this step. You're building a foundation.

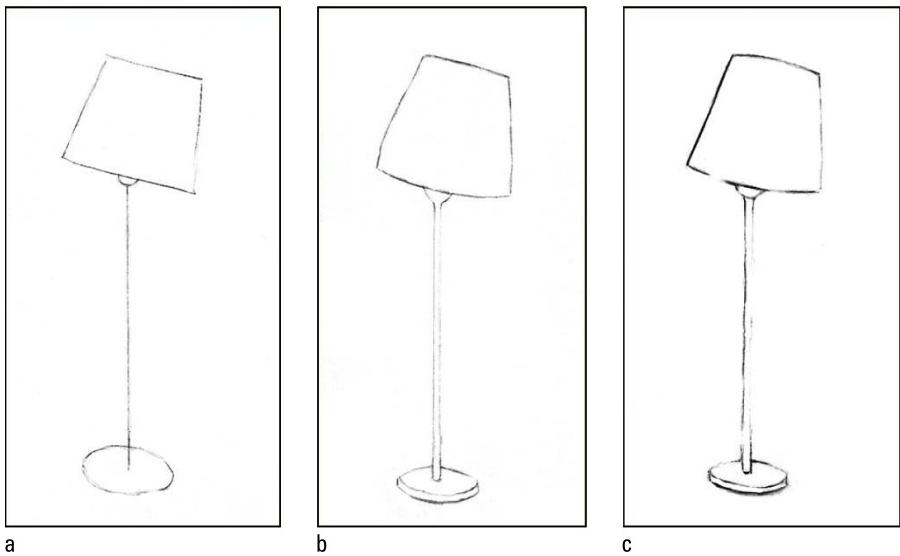
**3. Lighten the lines you drew in Step 2 so that you can just barely see them.**

**4. Now draw the contours of the object. Use the bulk created by the simple shapes as a guide (see Figure 6-9b).**

**5. Adjust the line weight as necessary.**

See the earlier section, "Following the flow of curved lines" for more help (see Figure 6-9c).

**FIGURE 6-9:**  
Using simple shapes and line weight to draw a realistic-looking lamp.



Jamie Combs



REMEMBER

In some cases, it's okay for your line weight to become so light that the line disappears altogether. Maybe a part of the form you're drawing is very strongly illuminated and you want to show the difference between that illuminated edge and all the rest. It's also okay to let the line disappear in places where the edge is just not as clear. Try this: Scan the edges of the object, labeling points along the way as "clear" and "less clear." You can let the line disappear in areas where the edge is less distinct. Don't worry; your object will still appear to be whole as long as visible lines remain on either side of the "lost" line.

## Fixing proportion problems

You may notice that even after breaking your objects down into simple shapes and drawing the appropriate contour lines, your drawing still looks off somehow. You might have a proportion problem. Don't start panicking just yet! This section shows you how to check your drawings for a few common proportion problems — and how to fix them, of course!

### Compare positive and negative shapes

One way to check for proportion problems is to compare the positive and negative shapes in your drawing to those in your subject. The *positive shapes* in a drawing are the major subject matter. The *negative shapes* are the spaces surrounding the positive shapes.

To help you visualize these two types of shapes, picture this: You're hanging down from the ceiling and looking at your living room. The sofa, chairs, and tables are the positive shapes, while the parts of the floor you see between them are the negative shapes.



REMEMBER

Don't let the words fool you. Negative shapes are just as valuable as positive shapes. Negative shapes in a drawing are what they are because of the arrangement of positive shapes. If you rearrange the positive shapes, the negative shapes change, too.

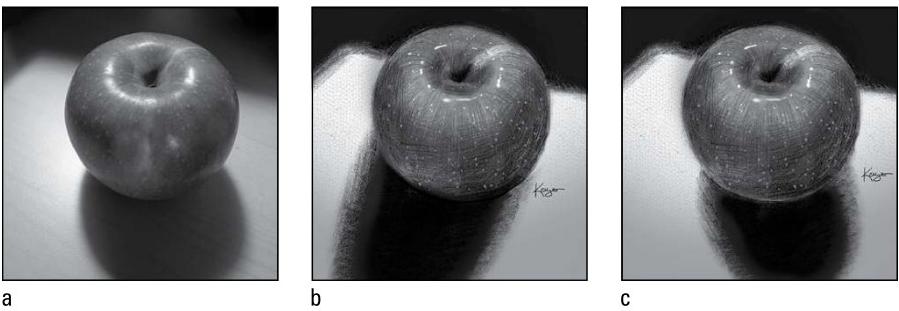
To help you get better at identifying negative shapes in your drawings, take some time to look for them in the world around you. The next time you see two objects near each other, shift your focus so that you're looking at the space between them. For example, pay attention to the shapes that happen between the trees in the woods behind your house or between two people waiting for the bus at the end of your street.

When you're drawing from life, you can use negative shapes to check the accuracy of positive shapes. For example, if a negative shape in your subject is formed between two tree trunks, you can compare the negative shape in your drawing to the negative shape in your subject to see if the trees are the right shape and in the right place. If the negative shapes in your drawing don't match up to the negative shapes in your subject, you know right away that something is off. You can fix your drawing by adjusting the positive shapes until the negative shapes look right.

To practice using negative shapes to check proportions in your drawing, check out Figure 6-10, which shows a photograph of a drawing subject and two drawings made from it.

The drawing in Figure 6-10b is pretty close, but it has some proportion problems. The photograph in Figure 6-10a shows an apple sitting on a table. A cast shadow comes forward from the base of the apple and angles slightly to the right. If you compare the negative shape in the drawing in Figure 6-10b (the white space around the shadow and apple) to the negative shape in the photograph in Figure 6-10a, you can see that the negative shapes don't match. At the lower-right corner of the drawing, the negative shape goes too far to the left, meaning that the cast shadow isn't the right shape. In the drawing in Figure 6-10c, the artist has adjusted the shape of the cast shadow so that the negative shape in the drawing matches the negative shape in the photograph.

**FIGURE 6-10:**  
Using positive  
and negative  
shapes to check  
proportions.



Kensuke Okabayashi

## Measure one dimension against another

Another way to check for proportion problems in your drawings is to measure one dimension against another. For example, in Figure 6-11, the height of the orange is roughly equal to its width. When you measure by comparing dimensions, you will find yourself saying things like “the height is roughly equal to the width,” “the width is one-third of the height,” and “the height is one-half of the width.” These comparisons are *proportional relationships*. When you’re drawing from life, the proportional relationships in your drawing should match the ones in your subject.

## Measure using a sighting stick

Measuring proportions like this is often called *sight measuring*. You are taking measurements with your eye instead of a ruler. For greater accuracy, you can use a sighting stick. A *sighting stick* is a measuring tool for sight measuring. The pencil in Figure 6-11 is an example. A good sighting stick to use is one that’s long, narrow, and reliably straight, like a thin knitting needle, thin paintbrush handle, or pencil. It’s important to use a thin tool because you need to be able to see your subject behind the tool to check proportions.

In the example, the artist is measuring an orange that is right in front of them. However, you can also use sight measuring to check proportional relationships in objects at a distance from you. Most of the time when you draw, it won’t be practical to measure the full height of something when you’re right up next to it. You aren’t going to be able to lay your sighting stick along the edge of a real-world building to measure its height! Luckily, you won’t have to try. When you measure proportions of an object that is distant from you, hold your sighting stick aloft between the object and your eye. Close one eye if it’s helpful. Line one end of your stick up with the dimension you’re trying to measure and place your thumb at the other end of the dimension you’re measuring. Hold onto it. You can use it to compare other dimensions of the object or any part of your drawing subject.



You might be wondering why I don't recommend a ruler for this job. A ruler is a flat tool that is great for taking measurements of flat things. When you draw from life, it's more expedient to use a sighting stick because the things you're measuring are not flat.

Follow these steps to practice using a sighting stick:

**1. Choose a unit of measure in your subject.**

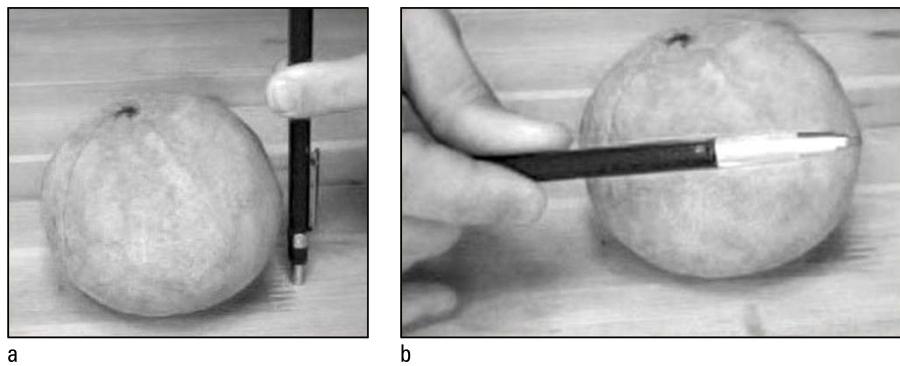
Your unit of measure can be any dimension of any object or group of objects. For example, if you're drawing a still life with apples and oranges, you may choose the height of one orange to use as your unit of measure. You could also choose the height of the whole composition as a unit of measure. After you have a unit of measure, you can use it to compare the dimensions of other objects in your drawing. (To see an example, check out Chapter 13, where I show you how to use the human head as a unit of measure for the rest of the body.)

**2. Use a sighting stick to measure the unit of measure.**

Hold the sighting stick between your eye and your subject. Align the end of the stick with one end of what you're measuring. Move your hand so you can place your thumb on the stick at the other end of what you're measuring. It is important to keep your sighting stick parallel to your face and at a uniform distance from your body. One way to do this is to hold your arm straight out from your body. If you have to measure something close up, be aware of where your sighting stick is in relation to the object and try to maintain that distance.

**3. Use your unit of measure to determine one proportional relationship in your subject.**

If you're using the illustrations, the height of an orange is your unit of measure. You can compare the height of an orange to its width (see Figure 6-11).



**FIGURE 6-11:**  
Using a sighting  
stick to compare  
the height and  
width of an  
object.

*Jamie Combs*

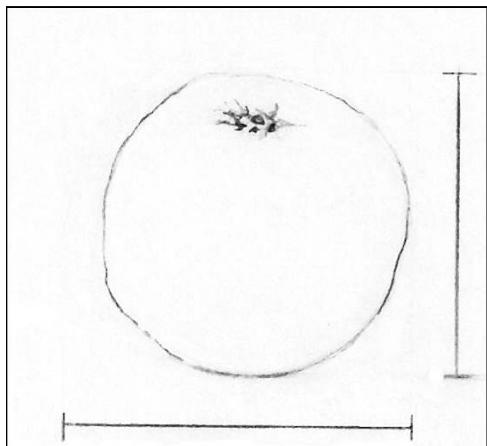
**4. Use your sighting stick to compare the two dimensions you found in Step 3 to your drawing.**

You compared the height and width of a real orange in Step 3. Next compare the height and width of the drawn orange (see Figure 6-12). The proportional relationships in your subject should match the ones you find in your drawing. If the proportions aren't the same, you need to adjust the dimensions in your drawing to make it right.



REMEMBER

Because proportional relationships are based on such comparative ratios as "one-third as long" or "one-half as high," the proportional relationships will stay the same whether your drawing is 1 inch tall or 100 feet tall. Figure 6-13, the height of the orange is roughly the same as the width. It doesn't matter at all what the actual height of the orange is, but if you decide to make the orange four inches wide, you also need to make it four inches tall. Likewise, if you make it 100 inches wide, it will need to be 100 inches tall.



**FIGURE 6-12:**  
Checking  
proportional  
relationships in  
your drawing.

*Jamie Combs*



REMEMBER

At first, using a sighting stick to compare your drawing to your subject may feel like a tedious task that's keeping you from the real fun of drawing. However, after you have a grasp on the basic process, you're sure to find this type of measuring enormously helpful. Try to stick with it for your first few projects. In the long run, this practice will make you better at gauging proportional relationships with your naked eyes. It will lead to more satisfying drawing experiences overall.



TIP

To make consistent measurements in each drawing you make, it's important that you follow a few guidelines. Keep your sighting stick parallel to your face. You can rotate the stick like windshield wipers. Just don't point it at what you're measuring. The urge to point your stick at your subject will be almost overwhelming, particularly when you are trying to measure something that is lying down or

otherwise going back in space. If you notice you are pointing your stick out toward your subject, just redirect it so it's parallel to your face again. Also keep your sighting stick a uniform distance from your face. Stick with your original unit of measurement. If you start off using the height of the human head, for example, you have the highest chance of keeping your measurements consistent throughout your drawing if you continue to use the human head as your unit of measure in every dimension in the drawing.

Objects aren't the only things you can measure in your drawings. You can measure the spaces between the objects, too. After you know how to use a sighting stick to make comparisons between one dimension of an object and another, you can use the same strategy to measure the dimensions of negative shapes (see the earlier section "Comparing positive and negative shapes" for more about negative shapes).

## Project: Using Lines and Shapes as Tools for Investigation

Like scientists, artists learn about the stuff of the world through exploration and observation. In the same way that scientists use microscopes to examine their subjects, artists use drawings to look at their subjects with a whole new intensity. Even when your subject is familiar to you, you gain new insights about it by drawing it. When you draw, even the back of your hand becomes uncharted ground.

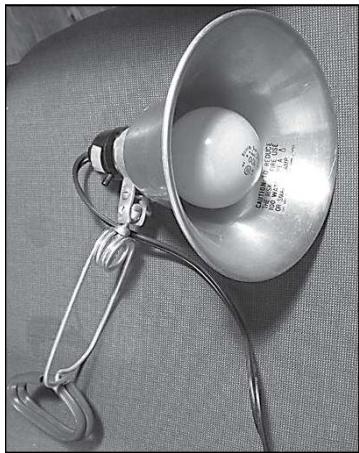


In this project, you conduct some drawing research (by making a blind contour drawing) and use it to make a line drawing of a simple object. As you move through the following steps, you can copy the illustrations shown here, but you'll get more out of the project if you draw from a real, three-dimensional object.

Choose a simple object with some variation in shape, such as a curvy bottle, lamp, or light bulb, and grab your sketchbook, 2H, 2B, and 4B pencils, vinyl eraser, kneaded eraser, and something to use as a sighting stick (like a knitting needle, barbecue skewer, or thin paintbrush). Then follow these steps:

1. **Arrange your object so you can comfortably see it fully without moving around. Set your sketchbook or sheet of drawing paper in front of you but beneath your eye level.**

Figure 6-13 shows the object being used in this project.

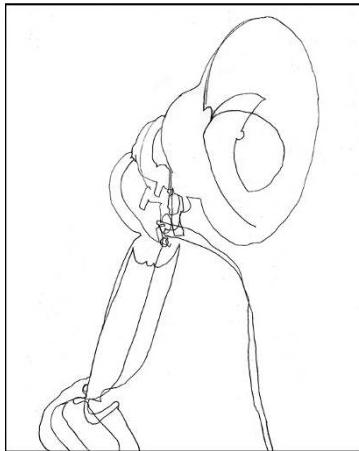


**FIGURE 6-13:**  
Positioning your  
drawing subject  
in front of you.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

**2. Use any pencil to make a blind contour drawing of your object.**

Choose a starting point on your object and set your pencil down on the paper in a corresponding place. Slowly move your eyes along the contour of the object. Without looking at the paper or lifting your pencil, synchronize your hand with your eyes to draw the contour of the object. Stop when you get back to the starting point (see Figure 6-14). Check out the earlier section “Getting Comfortable with Lines” for more on blind contour drawing.

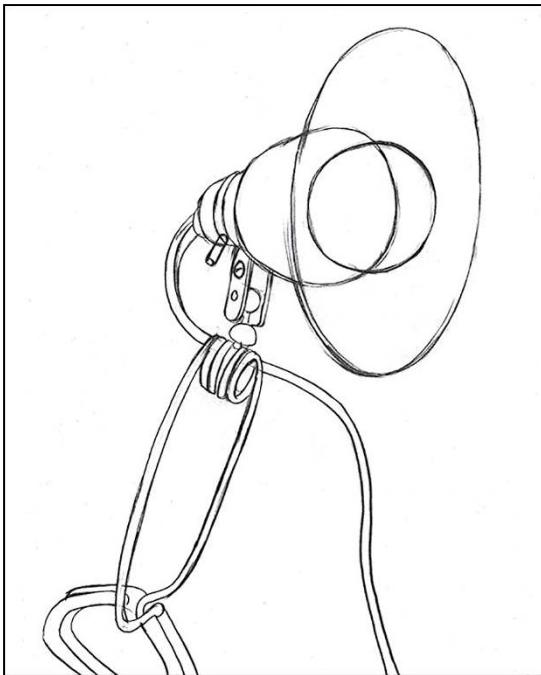


**FIGURE 6-14:**  
Making a blind  
contour drawing.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

3. On a separate piece of sketchbook paper, use your 2H pencil to draw the simple shapes that make up your object (see Figure 6-15).

Visually break your object into simple shapes. To figure out where to break up your object, look for changes in size or direction in the object. For example, because they're different sizes, the reflector of the lamp is a separate shape from the base of the lamp, even though they're connected.



**FIGURE 6-15:**  
Breaking your  
subject into  
simple shapes.

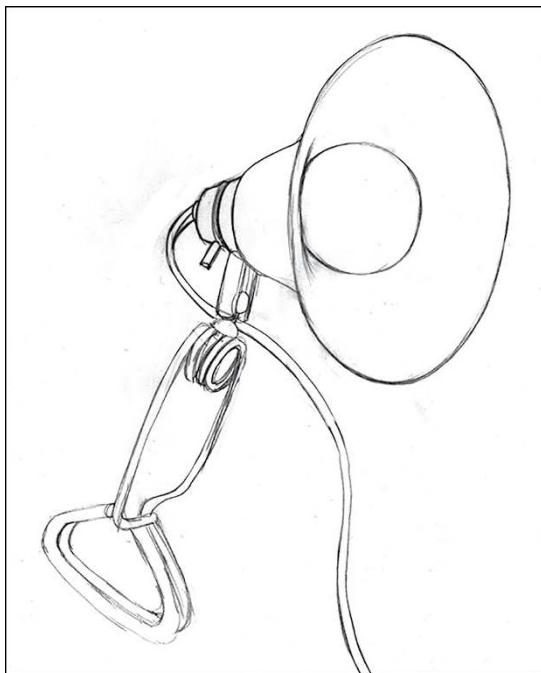
*Kensuke Okabayashi*

4. Use your sighting stick to check proportions in the simple shape drawing you made in Step 3.

First choose one dimension of your object to use as a unit of measure. Then use your sighting stick to measure the real-life unit of measure and compare the length of it to the height or width of any other part of the real-life object. Then use your measuring tool to make the same comparison in the drawing. If the real-life unit of measure is half the length of the other dimension you measured, the drawn unit of measure should also be half the length of the other dimension in the drawing. If the proportions are different, make adjustments and then check them again. (See the earlier section “Measuring one dimension against another” for more details about choosing and using a unit of measure to check proportions.)

- 5. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten all the lines in your simple shape drawing.**
- 6. On top of the simple shape drawing, use your 2B pencil to draw the contours of the object.**

Consider the weight of the lines you use to draw the contours. Look for places where the object catches light and where it's in shadow. Vary the weight of the lines to mimic the effect of light (see Figure 6-16).



**FIGURE 6-16:**  
Varying the line  
weight in your  
contour drawing.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

- 7. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten or erase any unnecessary lines and use your vinyl eraser to erase any stubborn marks.**

If needed, adjust the lightness of the light parts of the contour line with your kneaded eraser.

You can purchase stick erasers in a variety of widths to make it easier to make precise erasures.



TIP



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Identifying perspectives with vanishing points and horizon lines
- » Using vanishing points and horizon lines to create spatial depth
- » Exploring the effects of atmospheric perspective and foreshortening
- » Getting some practice with three types of perspective drawing
- » Learning about line weight variation
- » Turning basic shapes into three-dimensional drawings

## Chapter 7

# Exploring the Third Dimension

Drawing realistic images involves creating the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional drawing surface. There are a number of factors that go into creating such an illusion. These factors are all related to perspective — the way things look in a particular moment and from a particular point of view. Geometric perspective is a term I use in this chapter to talk about a systematic approach to drawing using math to codify human perception into a set of rules that reliably produce a convincing sense of depth. Geometric perspective is based on a system for drawing called linear perspective developed hundreds of years ago. Chiefly, linear perspective allows an artist to manage visual distortions that happen to lines as the objects they describe recede from the picture plane. A classic example of visual distortion in lines receding in space is a set of railroad tracks. Railroad tracks are parallel to each other and yet, if you were to stand inside a set and stare down the tracks as far as you can see, they would appear to

narrow progressively into the distance. Linear perspective was a revolutionary tool. It has some important limitations and has fallen out of favor, replaced by other approaches over time. However, there are seminal ideas in linear perspective that inform the way artists think about creating illusions of depth today.

In addition to geometric perspective, another significant factor contributing to the way you (and your audience) perceive three-dimensional forms (which are also called volumes) is the interplay of light and shadow with volume. Before you can draw realistic three-dimensional illusions, you need to understand how and why light and shadow are involved in perception of volume.

In this chapter, you learn the ins and outs of creating the illusion of depth in your drawings. You'll find out about what perspective means in drawing and get a chance to practice the principal methods artists have long used to engage with it. You'll discover how artists look at light and shadow and how you can do the same. After examining interactions of light and shadow on three-dimensional forms, you'll explore ways to use value to render functional light and shadows in your own drawings.

## Investigating Perspective Drawing

The idea that you can create the illusion of three-dimensional space on flat paper seems almost magical. For instance, some cityscape drawings have illusions so dynamic you may feel as though you're standing in the street, craning your neck to see the tops of buildings. Likewise, some still life drawings are so believable that you want to reach out and touch the objects.

With proper use of perspective, you can make your representational drawings more realistic by allowing the elements in the drawing to behave the way they would in real life. This chapter shows you how to use the tools of perspective to create the illusion of three-dimensional space in your drawings. It explains some basic guidelines for rendering different types of perspective and shows you how to apply them to your drawings.

It's important to note geometric perspective is a great start for making sense of the mechanics of perception but it's only a start. It is based on a mathematical system that can't account for the way perception actually works. Geometric perspective depends on single fixed point of view. Human perception is more complicated. Two eyes in constant motion scan the visible field, each reporting slightly different sets of information. Miraculously, this information is synthesized into a unified three-dimensional whole that adapts instantaneously with the movement of the head, incorporating awareness of multiple simultaneous perspectives, out/up/down/left/right.

Even with its limitations, you can learn a lot about how to draw what you see from practicing with the tools of geometric perspective. Keep in mind that these are tools to help you grow as an artist, not rules you have to follow for the rest of your life.

## Understanding geometric perspective

Put simply, *perspective* means point of view. When you employ the tools of geometric perspective (sometimes called *linear perspective*), you can create a drawing that tells the viewer what it would look like to view a specific scene from a particular point of view — from far below or far above or from far away or close up. Using geometric perspective makes your drawings appear three-dimensional (rather than flat) and more realistic.

Before you start using geometric perspective in your own drawings, take a minute to familiarize yourself with the following perspective-related elements (see Figure 7-1 for examples):

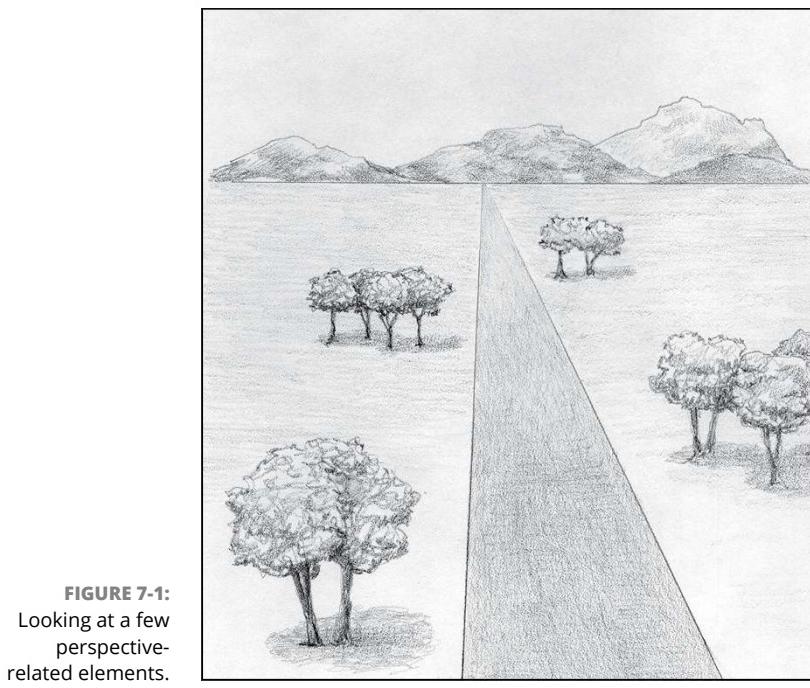
- » **Horizon line:** The *horizon line* is a line of demarcation that is always exactly in line with your eyes. Objects below this line are below your eye-level, and objects above this line are above your eye-level. It doesn't matter if you are sitting, standing, or lying down, the horizon is always in line with your eyes. For this reason, you will often find the horizon line used interchangeably with the term *eye-level line*.
- » **Convergence:** The appearance that two or more receding parallel lines will eventually meet is called *convergence*. Imagine standing on a set of railroad tracks. You know they're parallel, and, yet, the ties appear to get closer and closer together as they recede in space.
- » **Perspective lines:** *Perspective lines*, also called *orthogonal lines*, are straight lines that appear to converge at a point on the horizon line. They help establish guidelines for drawing objects in proper perspective.
- » **Vanishing point:** The *vanishing point* is the point on the horizon line where perspective lines converge.

Objects become smaller and smaller the closer they get to the vanishing point, and, when they reach that point, they seem to completely disappear (or vanish). Some objects have more than one vanishing point. (You learn about one-, two-, and three-point perspective later in this chapter.)

Lines of objects that are parallel or perpendicular (at a right angle) to the horizon line don't appear to go back in space and, therefore, don't converge at the vanishing point. For example, the top, bottom, and side edges of a building from a frontal view don't seem to retreat into space; they maintain their forefront position in the drawing.



REMEMBER



*Barbara Frake*

**FIGURE 7-1:**  
Looking at a few  
perspective-  
related elements.

The following sections take a closer look at the elements of geometric perspective and show you how to use them to make your drawings look more realistic.

## Look to the horizon line

In every perspective drawing you create, you determine the viewer's eye-level by choosing the position of the horizon line. You control whether you want viewers to feel like they're looking at the objects in your drawing from above, below, or straight on. For this reason, always begin a perspective drawing by lightly drawing the horizon line; make sure it's parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing space (if it's square or rectangular). Then you can place your subjects around that line based on the perspective you want to create.



REMEMBER

If you want viewers of your drawings to feel like they are

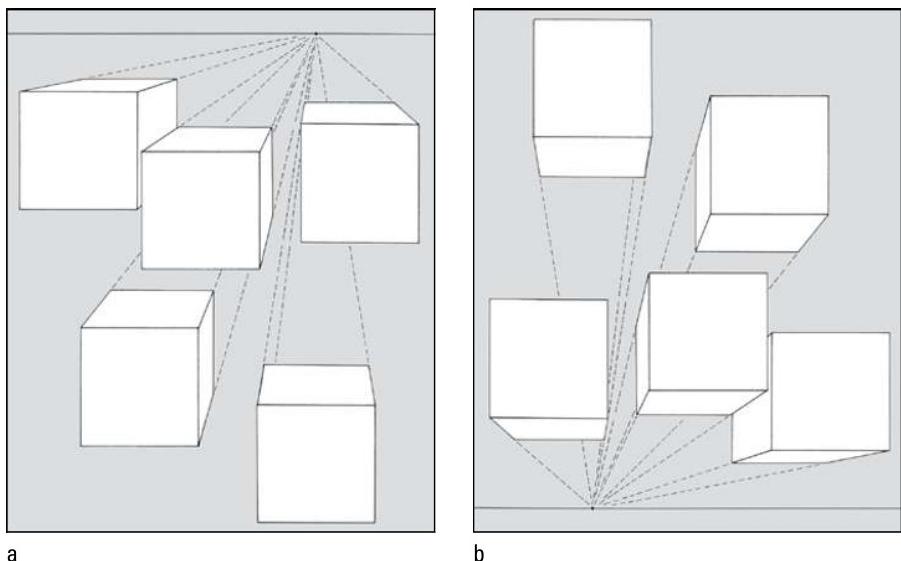
- » **Looking downward:** Draw the subjects below the horizon line.
- » **Looking upward:** Draw your subjects above the horizon line.
- » **Looking straight on:** Draw your subjects so that they touch or cross over the horizon line.



Be careful whenever you try to drastically change the perspective of an object in a drawing by drawing the horizon line way above or below your viewer's eye-level. Before you can change the perspective of the objects in your drawing, make sure you're familiar with the objects from all sides so that you can accurately represent the parts of the objects your viewers will see from your drastic perspective.

In Figure 7-2a, the horizon line (which represents your viewer's eye-level) is close to the top of the drawing space and higher than all the cubes, meaning that your eye-level is very high and you're looking down on most of the drawing. Even if you couldn't see the horizon line, though, you could still figure out your perspective by noticing that you can see the tops of all the cubes, meaning your eye-level has to be above them.

In Figure 7-2b, the horizon line is close to the bottom of the drawing space and below all the cubes, meaning that your eye-level is very low. Like with Figure 7-2b, though, you don't need a horizon line to tell you what your perspective is because you can see the bottoms of all the cubes, meaning that your eye-level has to be below them.



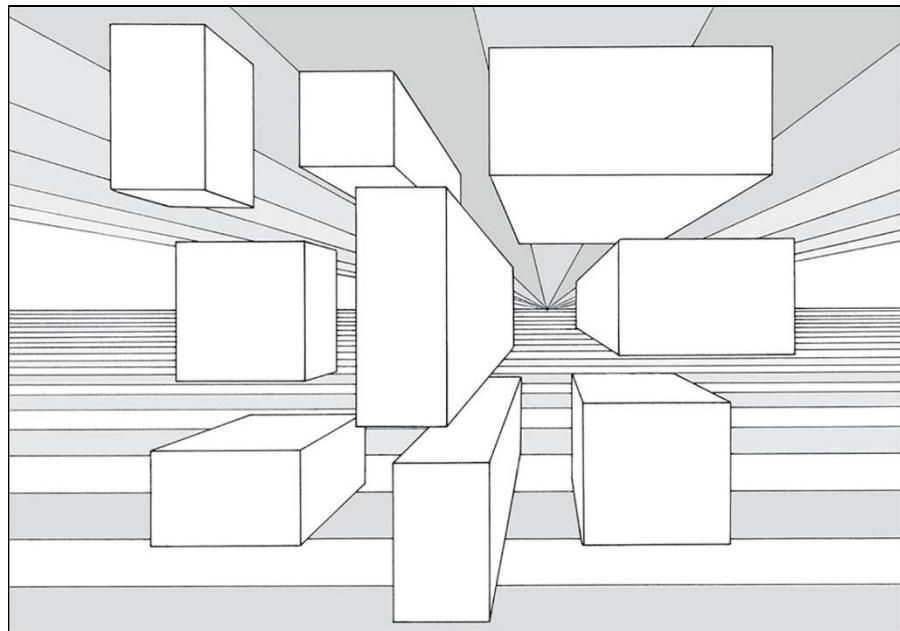
**FIGURE 7-2:**  
Observing cubes  
from two  
different  
perspectives —  
below and above  
the horizon line.

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In Figure 7-3, the horizon line is just higher than the center of the drawing space. (In case you're wondering, the horizon line is the top horizontal line.) The objects that overlap the horizon line are directly at your eye-level. Notice that you can't see the tops or bottoms of those objects, but you can see their receding sides.

Visually follow these receding sides to the vanishing point on the horizon line. Pay attention to the following:

- » Perspective lines of objects at your eye-level (objects that touch the horizon line) converge both downward and upward toward the horizon line.
- » Perspective lines of objects above your eye-level (objects that are above the horizon line) converge downward.
- » Perspective lines of objects below your eye-level (objects that are below the horizon line) converge upward.



**FIGURE 7-3:**  
An eye-level perspective with one vanishing point. Cubes at eye-level directly in line with the horizon line.

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## Find vanishing points

When an object's perspective lines recede into a properly placed vanishing point, your drawings appear more three-dimensional, realistic, and visually correct. So how do you find just the right place for the vanishing point in your drawing?



SKETCHBOOK

## Find the vanishing point in a photograph or other image

Looking for vanishing points in photographs is a good way to practice the basic principles of perspective. After you get used to identifying vanishing points in pictures, you can apply the same principles to real life — and your drawings.

To practice finding vanishing points in photographs, first find a photograph or other image (like the drawing in Figure 7-4a) that shows at least one human-made object that's level in real life and that has horizontal lines that recede in space. (Railings, decks, wharfs, horizontal siding, steps, and roofs are all good choices.) Then follow these steps:

- 1. Pick out an object in the image that you know is level and that has at least one set of parallel lines that go back in space.**

In Figure 7-4a, look at the parallel lines that define the top and bottom of the railing and the level wooden planks in the deck.
- 2. Tape a piece of tracing paper over the entire image.**
- 3. Use an HB pencil and a ruler to trace the upper and lower edges of the object you identified in Step 1, as well as any other lines that you know to be parallel to those edges (see Figure 7-4b).**

In the figure, the artist traced the outlines of the upper and lower edges of the railing and some of the spaces between the wooden deck boards.
- 4. Tape your traced drawing to a larger sheet of drawing paper so that you have enough room to extend the parallel lines of the object you drew in Step 3.**

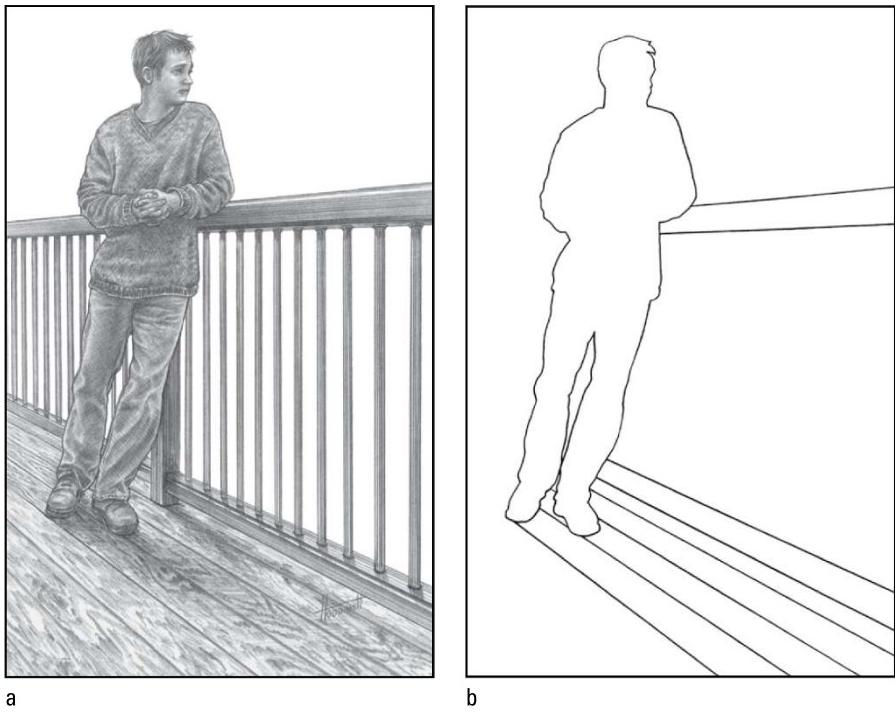
See if you can visually identify which lines are going to eventually converge.
- 5. Use your ruler and a pencil to extend all the parallel lines until they meet.**

Keep your lines light, in case you want to erase them later. Note the point where most of the lines converge. This is your vanishing point, which is located on the horizon line.

When an object has only one vanishing point, its perspective is called *one-point perspective*.
- 6. Draw a straight line through the vanishing point that is horizontal and parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing paper.**

This line is the horizon line. Figure 7-5 shows the location of the vanishing point (marked *VP*) and the horizon line (marked *AB*).

**FIGURE 7-4:**  
Tracing the  
outlines of the  
edges of a railing  
and the planks in  
a deck to find the  
vanishing point.



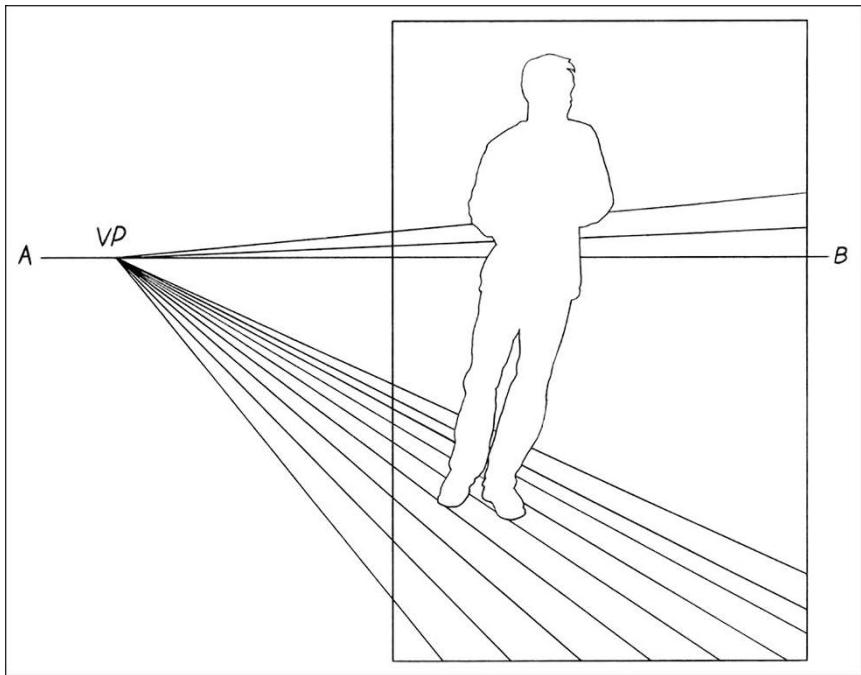
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Sometimes you can see more than one side of an object in an image. For example, imagine a photo that shows the corner of a building. If the angle (or corner end) of the building is closer to you than one of its sides, you need to use the same method used in the preceding steps to locate the second vanishing point (this type of perspective is called two-point perspective). Horizontal lines on other visible sides of the building also converge at vanishing points somewhere on the same horizon line. (For more details on two-point perspective, check out the later section “Project: Drawing Two-Point Perspective.”)

## Find a horizon line and vanishing point in real life

To identify the horizon line in a real-life scene, look straight ahead; the horizon line is in line with the farthest point you can see. (Remember that your eye-level and the horizon line are one and the same.) Note that you don’t have to be out of doors to find a horizon line. If the farthest point you can see when you look straight ahead is a spot on the wall, that’s your horizon line.

**FIGURE 7-5:**  
Extending the parallel lines until they converge at the vanishing point.



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SKETCHBOOK

After you identify the horizon line in a real-life scene, you need to look for a vanishing point. To do so, focus on one of the objects in the scene — a building perhaps — with sides that recede in space. Then grab your sketchbook, ruler, and some pencils and follow these steps:

**1. Determine where your real-life object is in relation to the horizon line.**

Many times, when you draw from life, the horizon line is obscured if not completely invisible, but don't worry. Remember that the horizon line is also your eye-level line. To find your eye-level line, all you have to do is look straight ahead at the scene you want to draw. Whatever point lines up with your eyes is on your horizon, or eye-level, line.

If your subject crosses the horizon line, make note of how much of the structure is above the horizon and how much is below it. Figure 7-6a shows an example of a real-life scene with an object with receding sides that lead toward an unseen horizon line. In this figure, the eye-level line falls about one-third of the way up the height of the house.

**2. On a fresh page in your sketchbook, use a ruler and 2H pencil to draw a horizon line on your paper (see Figure 7-6b).**

To determine where to place the horizon line on your paper, first decide how tall you want your subject to be on the paper. Then use what you discovered in

Step 1 about where the horizon line falls in relation to the subject. Notice that the horizon line in Figure 7-6b is one-third of the height of the leading line of the brick part of the house.

**3. Use your ruler and 2H pencil to draw a line to represent the front or leading corner of the structure.**

The artist of Figure 7-6 drew the corner of the brick part of the house as the leading corner because the brick part is taller than the wooden part in front of it.



As soon as you've drawn your horizon line, always place the tallest structures first. That way, you can be sure everything fits on the paper.

**4. Visually estimate the angles of the perspective lines that define the receding sides of your object.**

To do so, hold something long, thin, and straight (like a knitting needle, paintbrush, or extra pencil) in your nondominant hand and line it up with the top or bottom edge of any receding side of the object. Don't point the tool away from your face; instead hold it straight up and down and twist your wrist until the stick lines up with the angle you're measuring. It's very important to keep the tool parallel to your eyes when completing this step.

**5. While you hold your straight tool up to the real-life object, use a pencil to draw the angle of the line you're estimating in your sketchbook (refer to Figure 7-6b).**

Here, the artist estimates the angle of the roof of the deck (a line that the artist knows must be horizontal but that looks diagonal from her point of view, or perspective).

**6. Use a ruler to extend the perspective line toward the horizon line.**

Figure 7-6c demonstrates how the perspective line from the roof of the deck will eventually converge with the horizon line. As you can see, you may need to extend your horizon line far beyond the limits of the paper to get the right angles for perspective lines like this one.

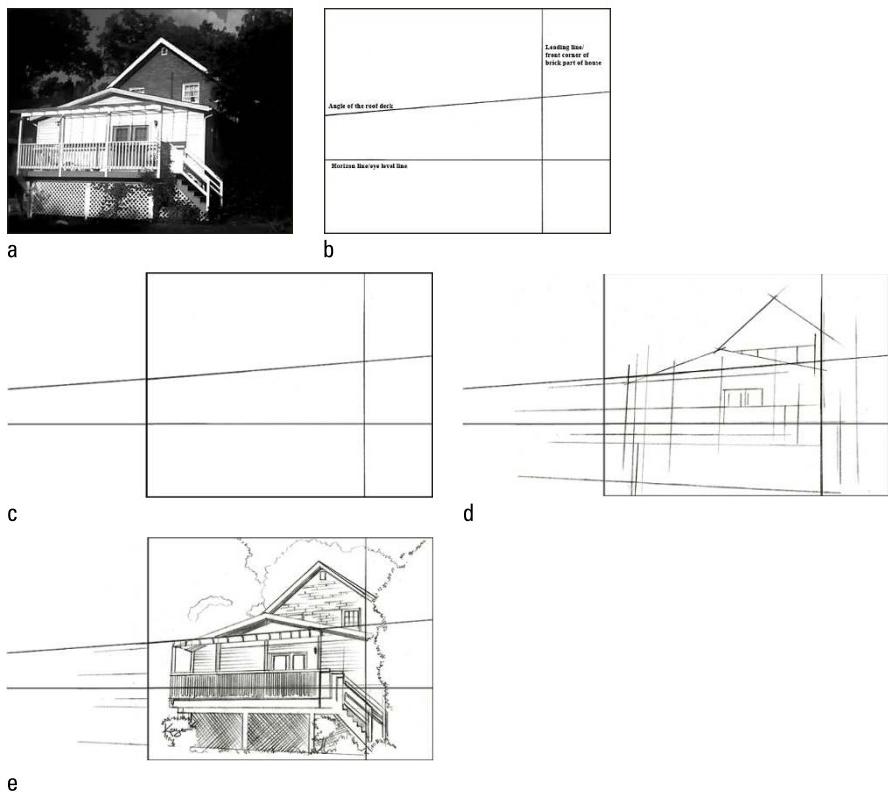
The place where the perspective line converges with the horizon line is the *vanishing point*.

**7. Draw vertical lines to indicate the placement of vertical elements in your drawing subject.**

In Figure 7-6d, the artist has drawn vertical lines to establish the placement of vertical elements of the house, such as windows, doors, and corners.

**8. Use the lines you've drawn as guidelines to figure out where and how to draw the details of your drawing subject.**

In Figure 7-6e, the artist has used the angles of the horizon line and first perspective line to determine the angles of the horizontal features like siding, brick, and trim. The first vertical was helpful for figuring out the angle of the vertical elements in the drawing such as the railing posts.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*



**FIGURE 7-6:**  
Using the  
receding parallel  
lines in a real-life  
scene to  
determine the  
vanishing point.

If your real-life scene doesn't include a building or similar object, you can use two parallel lines of the edges of straight roads, railway tracks, and fences to find the vanishing point.

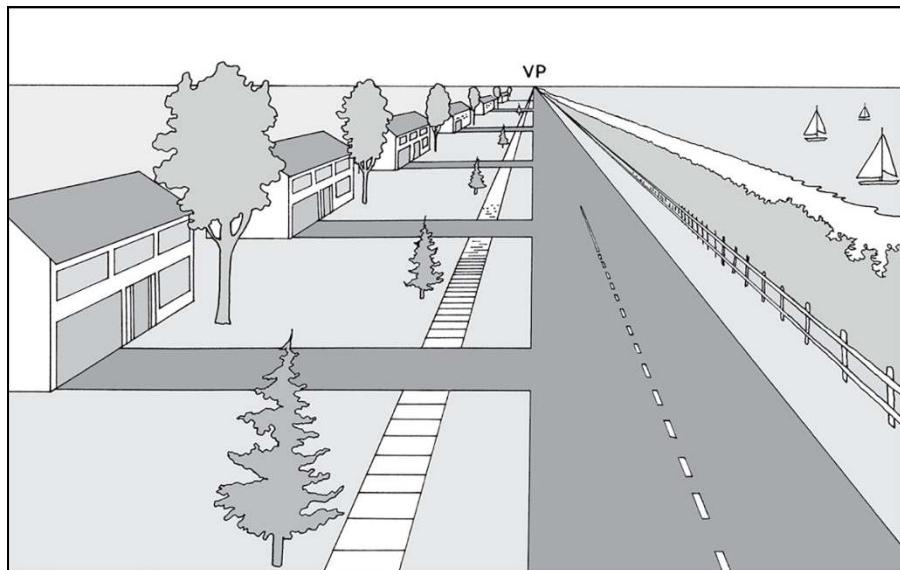
**REMEMBER**

## Identifying your perspective on depth

When it comes to creating a realistic illusion of depth in your drawings, you have several different perspective devices to choose from. In addition to geometric

perspective, consider using the following three devices to add a little more depth to your work (see Figure 7-7 for examples of all three):

- » **Scale:** The farther away an object is from you, the smaller it looks. The closer an object is to you, the larger it looks.
- » **Overlap:** Some objects overlap other objects that are behind them, providing an obvious clue that some objects are in front of others.
- » **Vertical location:** You can tell how far away an object is by looking at its vertical location in relation to the horizon line. The closer an object is to the horizon line, the farther away it is from you. The farther away from the horizon line an object is, the closer it is to you.



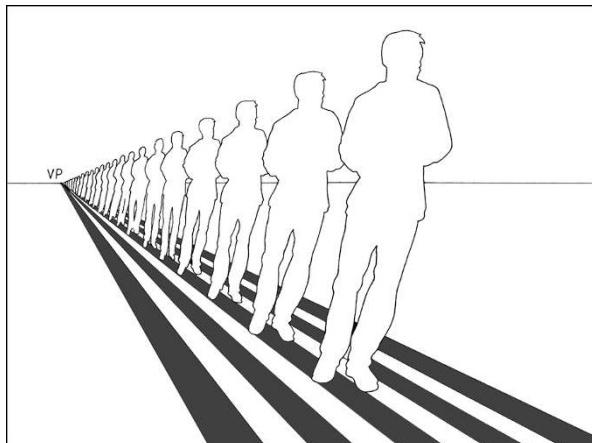
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**FIGURE 7-7:**  
Many perspective devices combine to make up the illusion of depth.

Like any other object, people appear to become smaller and smaller the closer they get to the horizon line; Figure 7-8 shows you an example. Notice that as people move back in space and become smaller, their feet seem to be planted higher vertically on the paper. They also seem to disappear entirely at the vanishing point.

Take another look at Figure 7-7. Imagine a figure moving along the sidewalk toward the horizon line. Do you see the way the sidewalk itself moves in a steady diagonal line ever higher until it meets the vanishing point? As you look at the figure, notice how the following clues all help create the realistic illusion of perspective and depth:

- » All objects seem to disappear from view at the same point (the vanishing point).
- » The trees, houses, and boats seem to be smaller the farther away they are.
- » The widths of the sidewalk, road, fence, and beach appear narrower the farther away they are.
- » Big trees overlap some houses, creating the illusion that they're closer to you than the houses behind them.
- » The tops of little trees overlap driveways, creating the illusion that they're in front of the driveways.
- » The larger objects and wider spaces are close to the bottom of the drawing space and appear to be closer to the viewer.
- » The position of the horizon line (where the earth seems to meet the sky) is close to the top of this drawing, creating the illusion that you're looking down on this scene from above.



**FIGURE 7-8:**  
Subjects become  
smaller until  
they seem to  
disappear at the  
vanishing point.

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## Expanding on elements of perspective

Creating the realistic illusion of spatial depth in your drawings requires more than an understanding of geometric perspective. Two other important elements of perspective you need to know are

- » **Atmospheric perspective:** The farther an object recedes into the distance, the lower contrast you see. (Atmospheric perspective is sometimes called *aerial perspective*.)
- » **Foreshortening:** As the angle of viewing becomes more extreme, visual distortion becomes more pronounced.

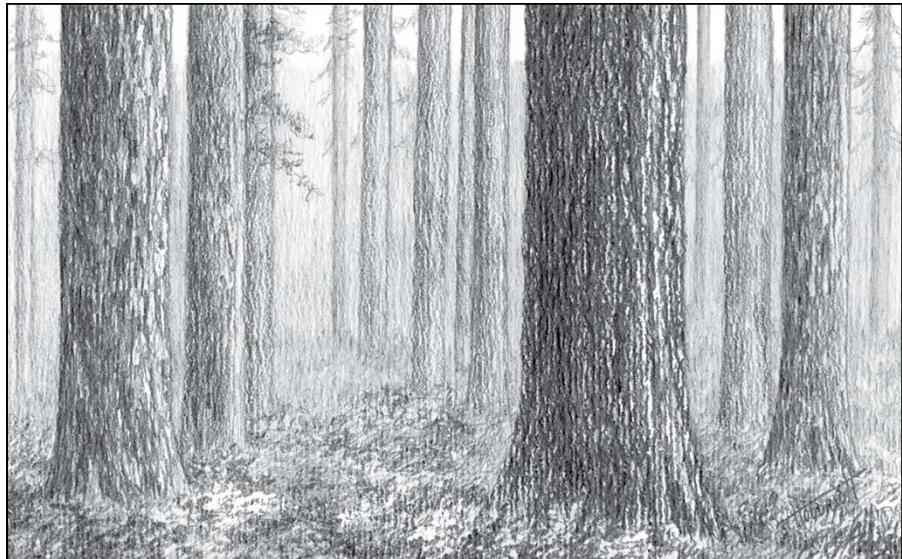
## Incorporate atmospheric perspective into your drawings

On a clear day, your ability to see faraway objects is affected by a variety of atmospheric components, such as tiny particles of dust and pollen or droplets of moisture. Your ability to see becomes even more obscured on days when the air is filled with haze, fog, smoke, rain, or snow. Because the atmosphere affects the way you see real life, your drawing can mimic this natural phenomenon if you attend to the effects of atmospheric perspective.

In Figure 7–9, the combination of atmospheric and geometric perspectives creates a more realistic view of a forest than you'd see if the artist chose to use only geometric perspective. As you look closely at the figure, notice the following:

- » The trees in the front have more contrasting values than the ones in the distance. In other words, their shadows are darker, and their highlights are brighter.
- » The trees in front appear more detailed than distant ones.
- » The trees in front are larger than the ones in the distance.
- » The bases of the trees become progressively higher on the paper as they recede into the distance.

**FIGURE 7-9:**  
Atmospheric perspective makes the trees in the distance look grayer and less detailed than the ones in the front.



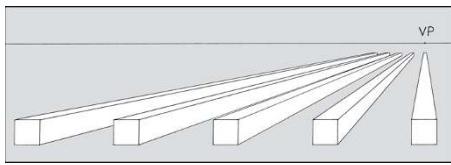
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## Manage foreshortening

Foreshortening creates the illusion that the length of an object appears to shrink as the object is pointed straighter at you (see Figure 7-10 for an example). What's more, the foreshortened qualities of objects become more noticeable when you see long objects from one end, as you see the boards in Figure 7-10.

**FIGURE 7-10:**

Foreshortening creates the illusion that objects look shorter when pointed toward you.



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By drawing objects with proper geometric perspective rather than trusting your visual perceptions, you can successfully manage foreshortening and create realistic drawings. Plus, if you practice the techniques of geometric perspective now, you can train your eyes to see the effects of foreshortening more clearly. Then eventually, you won't have to use such a mechanical method of drawing to create realistic images; you'll be able to draw just as accurately in a more freehand way.

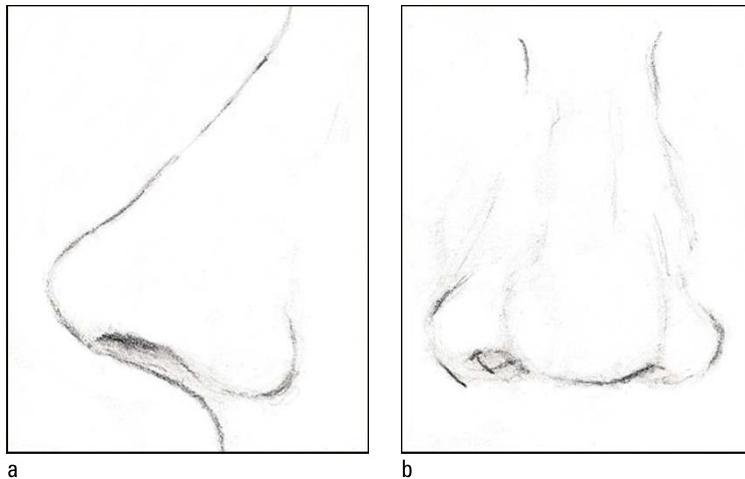
To see foreshortening at work, take a look at Figure 7-10. Assume that each of the boards is the exact same length even though the ones closer to the left seem to be longer than the ones on the right. Note that the one directly under the vanishing point seems to be the shortest of all because its end seems to be pointing straight out toward you.

I've been talking a lot in this chapter about how to create the illusion of depth when you are working with architecture or nature. It's easy to forget that depth can also be shallow, such as the space surrounding a nose. The human nose is a classic example of a foreshortening challenge artists face in drawing. In profile, the nose is a fairly straightforward triangular shape. However, from the front, a nose is highly complicated to draw because of the distortion created by foreshortening.

Take a look at Figure 7-11 to compare a nose in profile (Figure 7-11a) to a nose in frontal view (Figure 7-11b). The nose in Figure 7-11a forms a triangle that points out away from the face. As the nose turns to become a frontal view, however, the length of the nose is foreshortened. In Figure 7-11b, you can see a rounded volume, which is often referred to as the *ball of the nose*, that represents the end of the nose that points away from the face. Lightly drawn, gently curved lines define the left and right sides of the ball of the nose.

**Note:** Because you can't see actual lines separating the ball of the nose from the sides of the nose on a real-life nose, it's important to keep any lines you use to define the ball of the nose light.

**FIGURE 7-11:**  
Managing foreshortening  
when drawing a  
nose in profile  
and in frontal  
view.



*Jamie Combs*

## Project: Drawing One-Point Perspective

*One-point perspective* occurs when the frontal face of an object (such as a cube) is closest to you and its edges recede in space and converge at a single vanishing point.

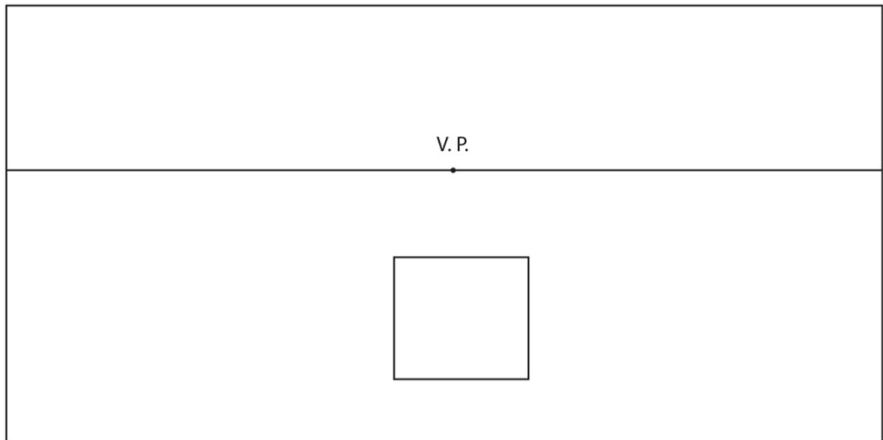


For this project, your focus is on accurately rendering a rectangular form with one-point perspective. Grab your sketchbook, ruler, and 2H and 2B pencils and then follow these simple steps:

1. Use a ruler and a 2H pencil to draw a horizon line parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing space.
2. Place a small dot in the center of the horizon line to represent the vanishing point.
3. Use your 2B pencil to draw a square or rectangle in the middle of the drawing space and slightly below the horizon line (see Figure 7-12).

The vanishing point in Figure 7-12 is marked *VP*.

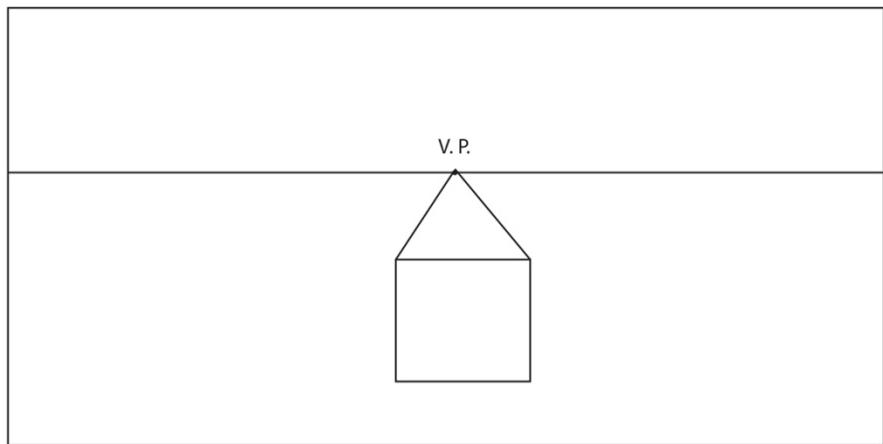
The top and bottom lines of this shape need to be parallel to the horizon line, and the two sides need to be perpendicular (at a right or 90-degree angle) to the top and bottom lines and the horizon line.



**FIGURE 7-12:**  
Drawing a square  
slightly below the  
horizon line.

Jamie Combs

4. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw lines from the top two corners of the square to the vanishing point (see Figure 7-13).



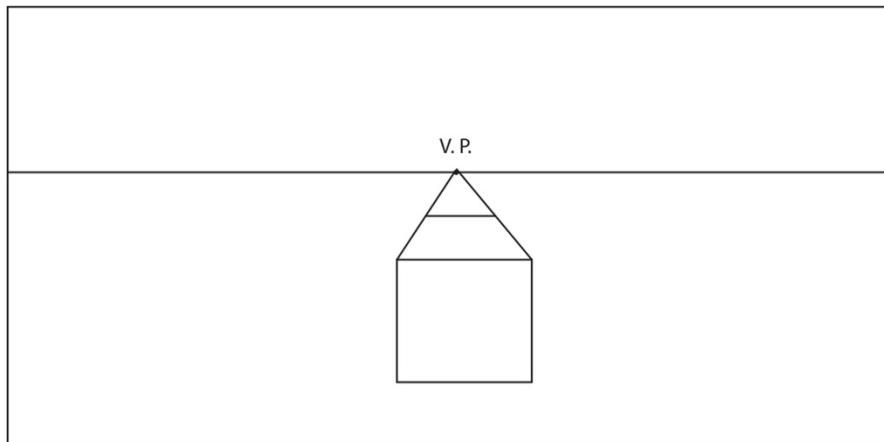
**FIGURE 7-13:**  
Drawing lines  
from the square  
to the vanishing point.

Jamie Combs

5. Complete your three-dimensional form by adding a line that connects the two diagonal lines you drew in Step 4 (see Figure 7-14).

This line needs to be parallel to the top of the square and the horizon line.

**FIGURE 7-14:**  
Completing the  
form by  
connecting the  
diagonal lines.



Jamie Combs

## Project: Drawing Two-Point Perspective

*Two-point perspective* occurs when the corner edge of an object — created when two sides of an object (such as a cube) meet — is closer to you than either side of the object. The edges of the two sides lead back to two vanishing points on the same horizon line.

For a real-life example, consider a building. When the corner of a building (or any straight-sided form) is closer to you than any of its sides, none of its sides are parallel to the horizon line. Therefore, you have to use two-point perspective to illustrate it accurately.

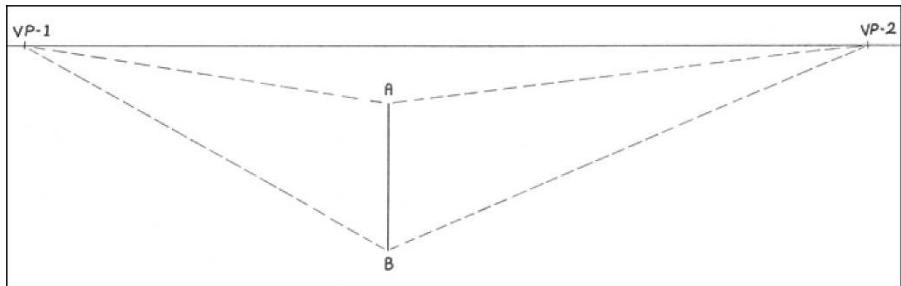


For a little practice with two-point perspective, grab your sketchbook, ruler, and 2H and 2B pencils; then follow these steps:

1. **Use your ruler and 2H pencil to draw a horizon line parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing space and mark two vanishing points on that line (see Figure 7-15).**

To help you keep track of which vanishing point is which, you can label one *VP-1* and the other *VP-2*.

2. **Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw a line vertical to the horizon line to represent the leading corner of your straight-sided form or building.**  
In Figure 7-15, this line is marked AB.
3. **Use your ruler and 2B pencil to connect the top and bottom of the line you drew in Step 2 to each of the vanishing points (refer to Figure 7-15).**



**FIGURE 7-15:**  
Setting up your  
two-point  
perspective  
drawing.

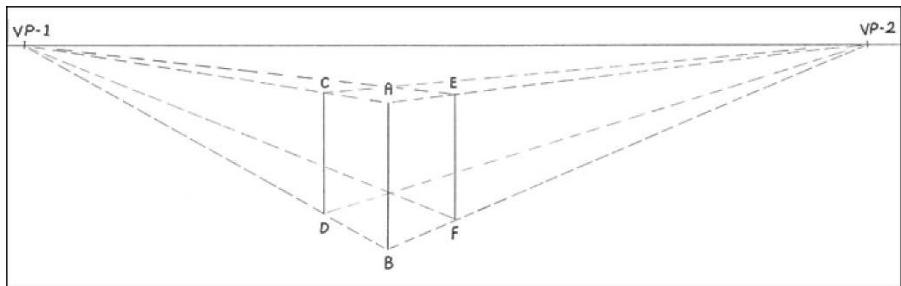
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4. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw two lines parallel to the line you drew in Step 2, making sure the end points for each line lie on the diagonal perspective lines you drew in Step 3 (see Figure 7-16).

You can make these two lines (which are marked CD and EF in the figure) as close to or as far from the first line as you like. They don't have to be equidistant from it.

5. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to connect the end points of the first line you drew in Step 4 to the vanishing point on the opposite side of the paper; connect the end points of the second line you drew in Step 4 to the vanishing point on the opposite side of the paper (refer to Figure 7-16).

In the figure, points C and D are connected to VP-2 and points E and F are connected to VP-1. Now all the sides of your rectangular form are in their proper places.



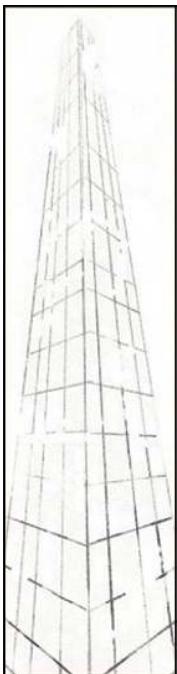
**FIGURE 7-16:**  
Finishing up your  
two-point  
perspective  
drawing.

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## Project: Drawing Three-Point Perspective

*Three-point perspective* occurs when a structure normally rendered in two-point perspective is tall or deep enough that the normally vertical parallel lines that define its sides appear to converge to a point well above or well below the horizon

line. Take a look at Figure 7-17 for an example. This drawing of a skyscraper has many things in common with a two-point perspective drawing. However, unlike a building drawn in two-point perspective, the lines that should be vertical in this drawing appear to slope in a slow, steady diagonal. This steady slope is actually much truer to life than strictly vertical lines would be.



*Jamie Combs*

**FIGURE 7-17:**  
Skyscraper drawn  
in three-point  
perspective.



REMEMBER

Geometric perspective has some limitations as a system for drawing and can be particularly problematic in three-point perspective when the vanishing points are placed inappropriately in the drawing space, causing massive distortion. To minimize the potential for distortion, make your vanishing points as far apart as possible. You can even attach your paper to a drawing board or table and draw your vanishing points on the surface outside the paper.



SKETCHBOOK

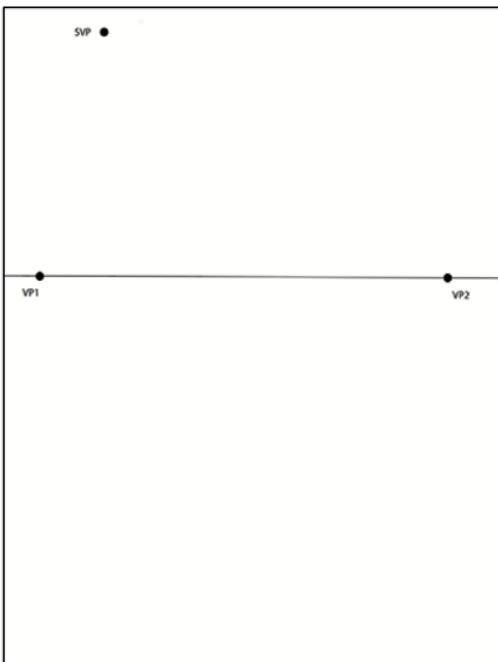
For a little practice with three-point perspective, grab your sketchbook, ruler, and 2H and 2B pencils; then try drawing a boxlike structure by following these steps:

1. **Use your ruler and 2H pencil to draw a horizon line parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing space and mark two vanishing points on that line.**

Label the points VP-1 and VP-2.

2. Add a third vanishing point high on the paper and about midway between the two vanishing points (see Figure 7-18).

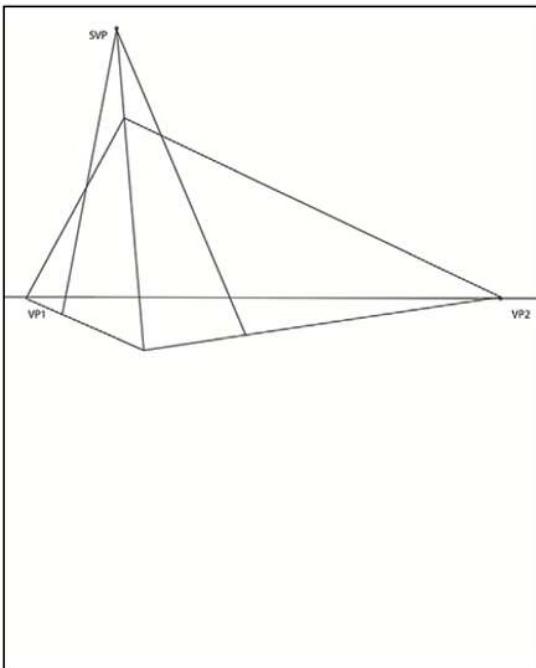
You can label this point *SVP* for *special vanishing point*.



**FIGURE 7-18:**  
Adding three  
vanishing points  
to your drawing.

*Jamie Combs*

3. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw a line that starts somewhere below the horizon line and continues upward to the third vanishing point.
4. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw perspective lines from the bottom of the line you drew in Step 3 to the first and second vanishing points on the horizon line (see Figure 7-19).
5. Decide how tall you want your boxlike structure to be and make a mark along the leading-edge line to denote the highest point.
6. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw perspective lines from this point down to the first and second vanishing points (refer to Figure 7-19).
7. Decide how wide you want the base of your boxlike structure to be and make marks along the bottom two perspective lines to indicate the width of the left and right sides of the structure.



**FIGURE 7-19:**  
Drawing  
three-point  
perspective  
above eye-level.

*Jamie Combs*

**8. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw two lines connecting the marks you made in Step 7 to the third vanishing point.**

This completes the box. If you want to turn the box into something like a skyscraper, you can erase the eye-level line and excess segments of perspective lines.

**9. Repeat Step 1 on a separate sheet of paper.**

**10. Add a third vanishing point beneath the horizon line and about midway between the two vanishing points (see Figure 7-20).**

You can label this point *SVP* for *special vanishing point*.

**11. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw a line that begins somewhere below eye-level and extends to the third vanishing point.**

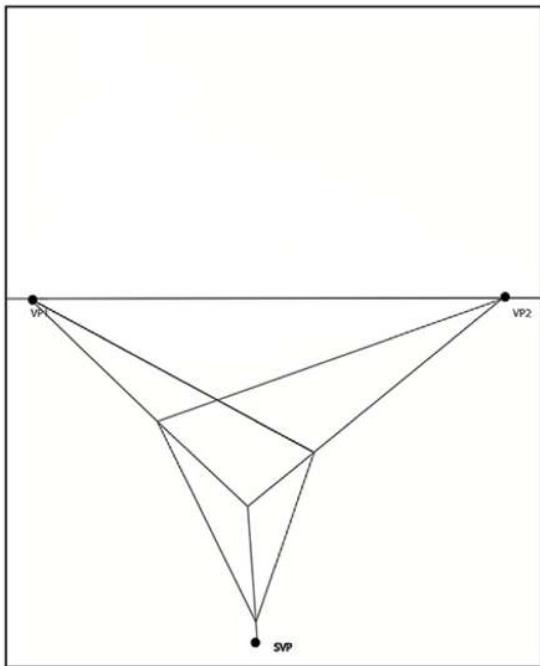
**12. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw perspective lines from the top of the line you drew in Step 11 to the first and second vanishing points on the horizon line (refer to Figure 7-20).**

**13. Decide how low you want your boxlike structure to be and make a mark along the leading-edge line to denote the lowest point.**

**14. Decide how wide you want the base of your boxlike structure to be and make marks along the two perspective lines you drew in Step 12 to indicate the width of the left and right sides of the structure.**

- 15.** Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw perspective lines from the marks you made in Step 14 up to the first and second vanishing points (refer to Figure 7-20).
- 16.** Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw two lines connecting the marks you made in Step 14 to the mark you made in Step 13.

Figure 7-20 shows what the finished below-eye-level three-point perspective drawings looks like.



**FIGURE 7-20:**  
Drawing  
three-point  
perspective  
below eye-level.

*Jamie Combs*



TIP

Three-point perspective drawings can be highly naturalistic, but artists usually use three-point perspective to create dynamism (an energetic or forceful arrangement of objects in space). Think graphic novels and animations. The distance between the special vanishing point and the first and second vanishing points affects dynamism in three-point perspective drawings. The closer the third vanishing point is to the first two vanishing points, the more dynamic the angles of the tall building will be. However, if you place the third vanishing point too close to the other vanishing points, the result may be quite distorted. You can experiment with various placements for the third vanishing point to get different levels of dynamism in your structures.

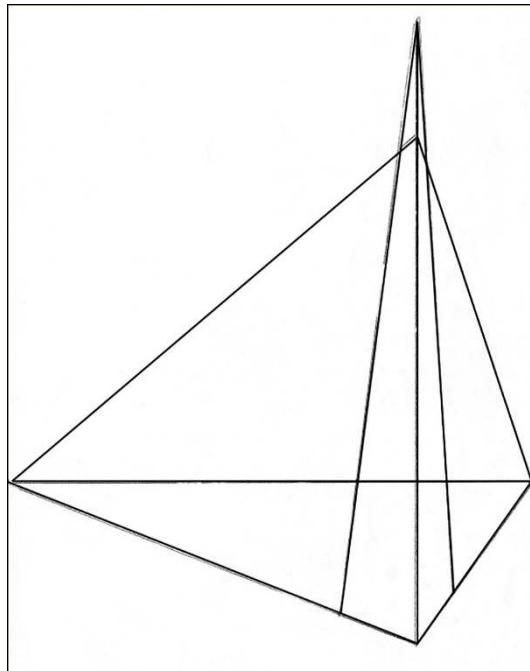
# Project: Blasting into Space with Dynamic Perspective Drawing

Three-point perspective is a great tool for creating more precise realism, but its most exciting use is for creating imaginative, dynamic drawings like the imaginary city you create in this section.



For this three-point perspective project, you need your sketchbook, 2H and 2B pencils, vinyl eraser, and ruler. After you have your tools handy, follow these steps:

1. Using your 2H pencil and ruler, draw a horizon line parallel to the top and bottom of your drawing space, mark two vanishing points on that line, and label the points *VP-1* and *VP-2*.
2. Add a third vanishing point high on the paper and somewhere between the two vanishing points and label it *SVP*.
3. Follow Steps 3 through 8 in the section “Project: Drawing Three-Point Perspective” to draw the first box, or building, of your cityscape (see Figure 7-21).



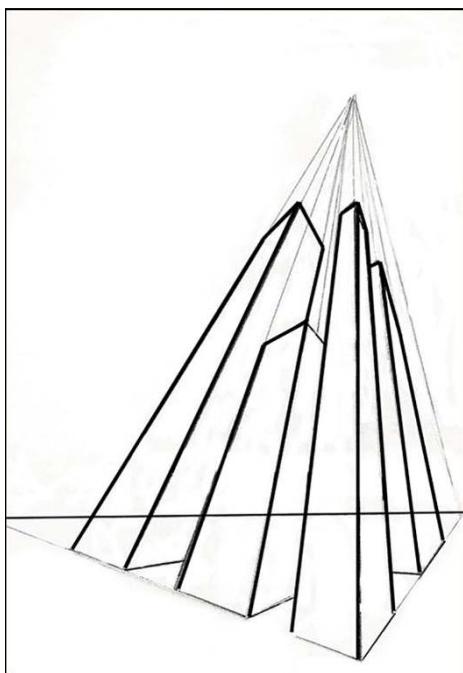
**FIGURE 7-21:**  
Begin your cityscape with a single box that will become the first building.

*Jamie Combs*

**4. Add more boxes, or buildings, to your cityscape (see Figure 7-22).**

To draw the second box, choose a spot along either the left or right perspective line you drew between the lower-front corner of the first box and the left and right vanishing points. Use your ruler and 2B pencil to draw a line between that point and the first and second vanishing points. Repeat Steps 5 through 8 from the previous section “Project: Drawing in Three-Point Perspective.”

Repeat this process until you have drawn as many buildings as you want to include in your cityscape. Varying the heights of the buildings makes your drawing more exciting and lifelike.



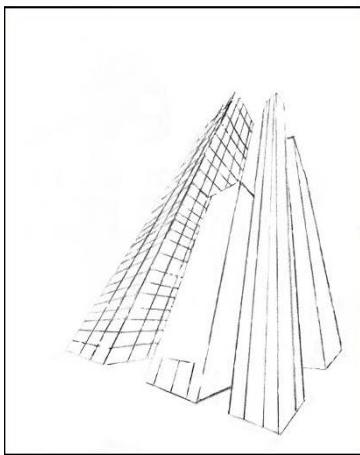
**FIGURE 7-22:**  
Using perspective lines to draw the other buildings that will line the street.

*Jamie Combs*

- 5. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten and lift out all unnecessary lines.**
- 6. Add windows, doors, and other embellishments to the buildings you drew in Step 4 (see Figure 7-23).**



Doors and windows are rectangles, too. To keep them in perspective, use your vanishing points to draw them just as you did for the buildings themselves. If a door is on a wall that recedes in space, use the same vanishing point you used for the top and bottom of the wall to draw the top and bottom of the door.

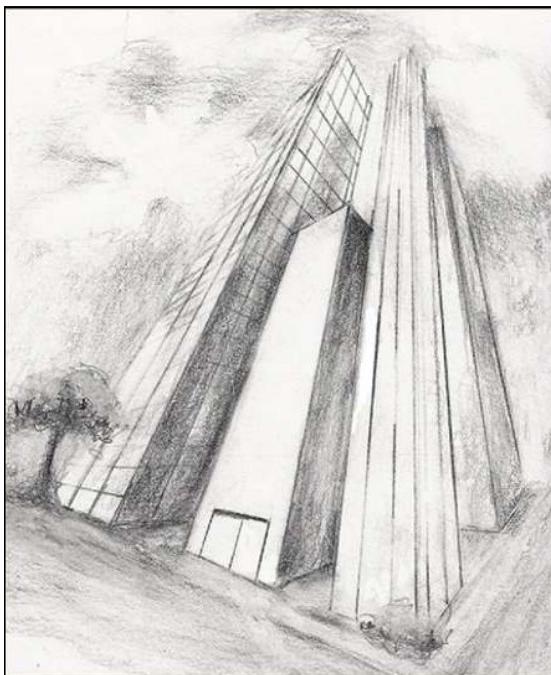


**FIGURE 7-23:**  
Using your  
vanishing points  
to draw the doors  
and windows.

*Jamie Combs*

7. Erase any extra lines and add finishing touches, like shading, to make your drawing more realistic (see Figure 7-24).

Use your 2B pencil to darken important lines.



**FIGURE 7-24:**  
A dynamic  
imaginary city  
invented with  
three-point  
perspective.

*Jamie Combs*

# Seeing Light and Shadows and Using Lines to Represent Them

Light and shadows visually define objects; to create three-dimensional objects on paper, you have to draw both of these elements. But before you can start drawing the light and shadows you see (and the objects they define), you need to train your eyes to *see* light and shadows like an artist.

## Envisioning light and shadow as value

So what exactly do artists see? The answer is simple — values. *Values* are degrees of lightness and darkness. They range from black to white and include all the shades of gray in between. Artists use drawing techniques to translate the light and shadows they see into values to create the illusion of the third dimension.



TIP

Values are contextually relative to environment and light source. The perceived degree of lightness (or darkness) of an object depends on its local value and its relationships with its surroundings. All objects have local value. *Local value* is the inherent quality of lightness or darkness relative to absolutes. For example, a pale yellow cup has a light local value, whereas a dark blue cup has a dark local value. Local value is impacted by relative values (relationships and lighting conditions). A pale yellow cup will look relatively darker when it's in a darkened room. To figure out how dark or light to make something, find points of comparison. Take note of the lightest and darkest values in your drawing subject. If you are unsure about a value, ask yourself questions such as, "Is this value closer to the lightest value or the darkest value?" and "How close is it?"

## Navigating line weight variation

Artists can vary the weight of their lines to show a range of values in a line drawing. In case you're scratching your head about line weight right now, the word "weight" is frequently used metaphorically in art to describe the relative quality of heaviness and lightness in our perception of something.

In drawing, for example, the term *line weight* refers to the relative quality of heaviness or lightness in the appearance of a line. As you might imagine, a heavy line is thicker or darker than other lighter lines. The weight of a single line can shift from light to heavy and back again infinitely depending on the needs of the artist. You get a chance to see why varying the weight of your lines is helpful in upcoming sections that cover going from squares to cubes and from rectangles and triangles to boxes, cylinders, and cones.



TIP

Line weight is a relative quality. The heaviness (or lightness) of a line depends on its relationship to other lines or line segments.

## Taking Shapes into the Third Dimension

Just about anything you can think of has shape, and many things also have volume. What's the difference? *Shape* is the two-dimensional, or flat, quality you see in the outline of an object, while *volume* is the three-dimensional quality you see in all physical objects. In drawing, the difference between a two-dimensional shape and a three-dimensional object is the illusion of volume. So when you draw the outline of a banana on a piece of paper, you're drawing the banana's shape. When you draw a banana so that you can see its fullness coming out of the paper, you're drawing its volume.

To make the flat shapes of your subjects pop out into three-dimensional volumes, you can focus on perspective and/or light and shadow.

- » You can use what you learned so far about the way perspective impacts the appearance of an object to construct a believable illusion of three-dimensional volume. For example, you can use the principles of perspective drawing to transform a flat square into a cube that appears to have six sides. (Go back to the beginning of this chapter for everything you need to know about perspective drawing.)
- » *Light* and *shadow* are partners in the dance of three-dimensionality. The primary way you can tell something has dimensions is because of light and shadow! Light lands on a three-dimensional object and a shadow appears automatically on any surface that is not getting direct light. A shadow doesn't have to be one of those long cast shadows like the one that bedeviled Peter Pan. A shadow can be as small as the line between the bottom of your coffee cup and the table it is sitting on. (See Chapter 8 to find out more about shadows.) No matter how big or small, shadows are extremely important to get right if you want to make a believable illusion of three-dimensional volume.

In the following sections, you find out how to turn flat shapes into three-dimensional volumes. Squares become cubes, rectangles become cylinders, triangles become cones, and circles become spheres. Conveniently for you, cubes, rectangles, cylinders, and cones are the building blocks for all three-dimensional forms, so after you know how to draw them accurately, you can draw convincing illusions of volume for any object.

## From squares to cubes

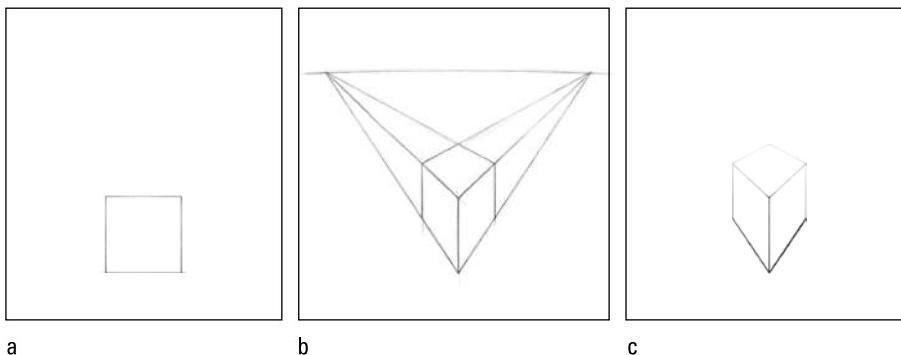
You may be familiar with the concept that a square is a two-dimensional shape with four equal sides and four right angles and a cube is a three-dimensional version of a square with six square surfaces of the same size.

To transform a square into a realistic cube, you can use perspective and line weight variation (see the sections on perspective and line weight variation earlier in this chapter).

Figure 7-25 shows the transformation from square to cube. In Figure 7-25a, you see a square. In Figure 7-25b, you see a cube with its top and two sides facing you and receding in space. To achieve this recession, the artist drew the cube according to the principle of two-point perspective, which allowed them to make only two of the cube's sides visible to the viewer (see the sections on drawing in one- and two-point perspective earlier in this chapter for details). Because you know these sides are on a cube, you know each of them is a square, yet the squares appear distorted from their pure geometrical shape. This distortion reflects what would happen to the sides of a cube if you looked at it from the point of view of the artist.

In the Figure 7-25c, line weight variation helps make the basic cube from the second stage more realistic and three-dimensional. Notice the way the darker edge appears to advance. In this case, the heavier line weight works to enhance the illusion of three dimensionality because it mimics the phenomenon of atmospheric perspective. (See the section “Incorporating atmospheric perspective into your drawings” earlier in this chapter.)

**FIGURE 7-25:**  
Adding  
perspective and  
line weight  
variation to  
turn a square  
into a cube.



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## From rectangles and triangles to boxes, cylinders, and cones

You need to be familiar with other basic shapes besides the square before you can successfully turn every object you see into a three-dimensional volume on paper. In case you don't have many fond memories from your geometry class (or any memories at all!), I sum up what you need to know here:

- » *A rectangle* is any four-sided shape in which all its corners have 90-degree angles. True, a square is one type of rectangle, but unlike the square, the sides of a rectangle don't have to be equal in length. Like the square, any rectangle can become a three-dimensional volume with the right perspective drawing and/or shading.

When the sides of the rectangle you're drawing aren't all equal, the volume you create is simply called a *box*. But when you replace the straight lines on either pair of opposite ends with compressed circular shapes, you turn your rectangle into a *cylinder*. (In case you're wondering, the compressed circular shapes represent circles that recedes in space.)

- » *A triangle* is any three-sided shape. A triangle can become a three-dimensional volume called a *cone* if you replace one side of the triangle with a compressed circular shape.

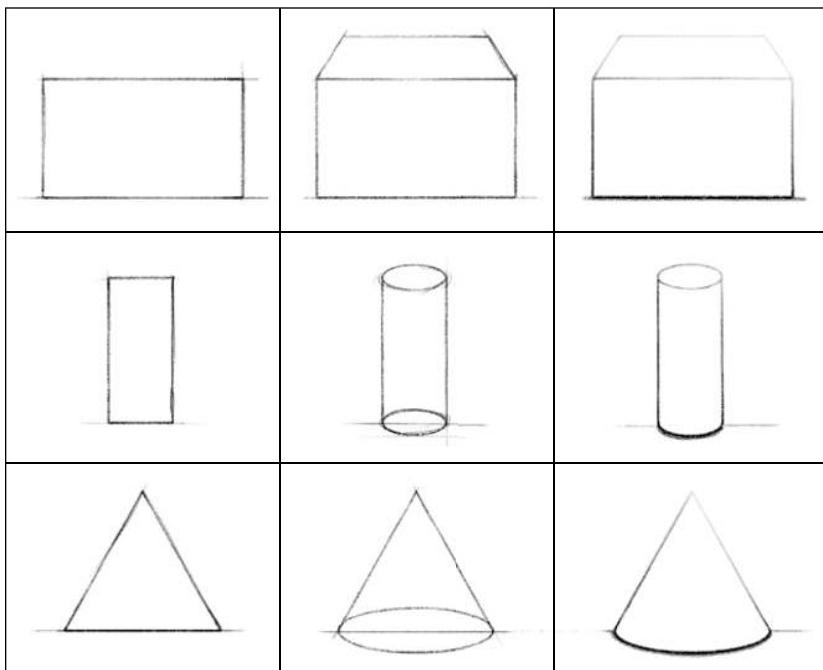
Figure 7-26 shows how basic rectangles and triangles transform into three-dimensional boxes, cones, and cylinders when you add perspective and line weight variation. (See the sections on perspective earlier in this chapter for information about perspective.) Take note of how line weight variation can begin to represent light and shadow without even adding any shading.

» **Box:** In the top row of Figure 7-26, a freehand, sketchy rectangle transforms into a three-dimensional box. In the center of the box row, perspective drawing makes the top of the box appear to recede in space. In the final section of the box row, line weight variation makes the box look even more three-dimensional because the line weight tells your eye about light and shadow! The lightest line weight is in the upper-left side of the box. This tells you where the light source is striking the box most strongly. The heaviest line weight is underneath the base of the box. This is because the space underneath the box is totally blocked from the light source.

» **Cylinder:** Now look at the middle row of Figure 7-26 to see to make a rectangle into a cylinder. In the center of the cylinder row, the rectangle is already transformed by perspective. The top and bottom of the cylinder are formed by compressed circular planes. The compression is because of the effect of perspective on circles going back in space. In the third section of the

cylinder row, line weight variation comes in and enhances the cylinder's three-dimensional volume. The line underneath the cylinder is drawn with the heaviest line weight.

» **Cone:** The third row of Figure 7-26 shows you how to make a cone out of a triangle. See if you can pick out the clues from perspective and line weight variation that tell your eye this is a three-dimensional, curved volume. Take a look the base of the cone in the second section of the cone row. Thinking back to what you read about the cylinder, you know the circular form at the base is a compressed because of the effects of perspective. In the final section of the cone row, the heaviest line weight is at the bottom. Why do you think the artist made that choice? (For a hint, look back to what you read about the use of line weight in the box and cylinder.)



**FIGURE 7-26:**  
Using perspective  
and line weight  
variation to turn  
2-D shapes into  
3-D volumes.

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## From circles to spheres

Simply stated, a *sphere* is a three-dimensional version of a circle. Examples include planets, orbs, and balls. To create the illusion of volume in the spheres in your drawings using only line, use line weight variation to represent the way light falls on the contour of a sphere.



TIP

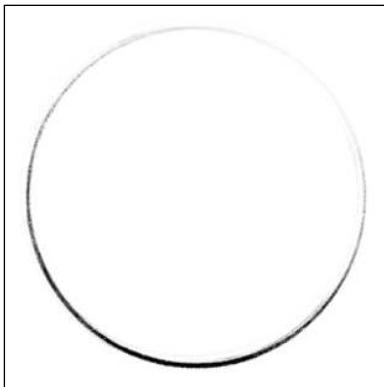
The word *contour* is often confused with the word *outline*. An *outline* is a line that traces a shape. A *contour* is the entire outer surface. The contour of an orange, for example, is the entire peel, not just the circular shape you see when you look at the fruit head on.

The easiest way to draw the light falling on your spheres is to let the line describing the lightest part of the contour become very light. If the light source is strong, let the contour disappear briefly to express the strength of a light so bright the contour is practically invisible at the brightest point (the arrow in Figure 7-27). Like any three dimensional volume, the space underneath a sphere will be the darkest part of the sphere. You can use line weight variation to represent the darkest part of the sphere.



TIP

Take care when darkening part of a continuous line to make transitions gradually. If your transitions seem too abrupt, use your kneaded eraser to gently tap the line where you want it to get lighter. Then go back in with your pencil to ease the transition by retracing the line with incremental increases in pressure.



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**FIGURE 7-27:**

You can use line weight variation to indicate where light and shadow fall on a sphere.

## Project: Drawing a Sphere

Turning two-dimensional shapes into three-dimensional objects on paper may look a little complicated, but it really isn't too hard. In this project, you turn a basic circle into a realistic sphere complete with suggestions of light, shadows, and plenty of value contrast.



SKETCHBOOK

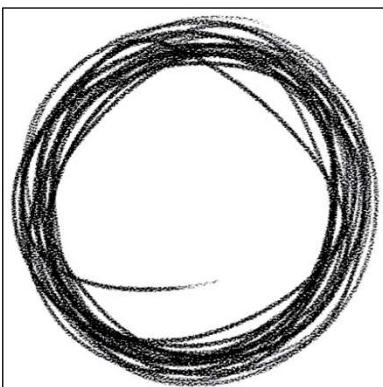
Before you get started, gather your sketchbook, erasers, and 2H (or HB), 2B, and 6B pencils; then follow these steps:



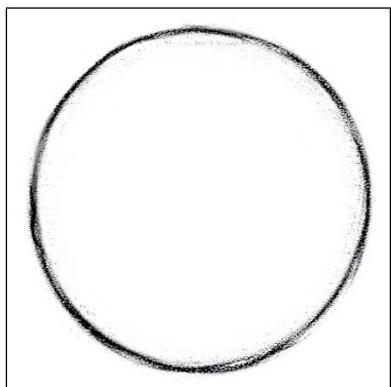
TIP

**1. Use your 2H pencil and a light touch to draw a circle (see Figure 7-28a).**

If you feel uncomfortable drawing circles freehand, practice on a piece of sketchbook paper first. It is easier to draw circles if you move your hand quickly and lightly in a circular motion, allowing yourself to draw multiple overlapping circles (see Figure 7-28a). Don't worry about making a mess. Use your eraser to get rid of everything that isn't a circle.



a



b

**FIGURE 7-28:**  
Going from a  
circle to a sphere.

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- 2. Use a kneaded eraser to daub away the lines of the circle until you can barely see them (see Figure 7-28b).**
- 3. Use a 2H or HB pencil to lightly draw the contour of the sphere (see Figure 7-29a).**

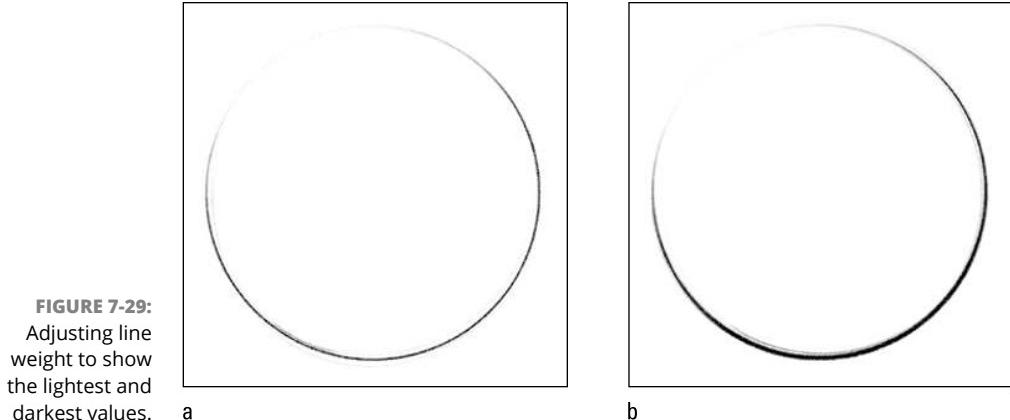
Keep the line weight on the lightest part of the sphere very light or erase that part altogether. Imagine the light source in the drawing in Figure 7-29a is from above and slightly to the right.



REMEMBER

Don't forget to identify the location of the highlight and to allow that part of the contour to become very, very light. In fact, why not see what happens if you use your plastic or vinyl eraser to make it disappear? Use your kneaded eraser to gently lighten the contour lines, making the width of the lines taper to the part that disappears. This will make the transition look gradual and more natural.

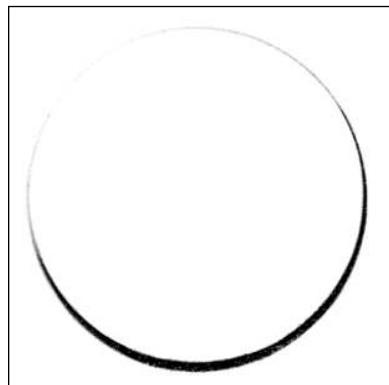
- 4. Use a 6B pencil to retrace the bottom edge of the circle, just the amount that would press against the imaginary surface your sphere sits on (see Figure 7-29b).**



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- 5. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten the line if the transition is too abrupt and then go back in with your pencil to smooth the transition by making gradual increases in pressure toward the center of the heaviest line weight.**
- 6. Use your 2B pencil to adjust the weight of the contour line on the opposite side of the brightest spot.**

It will need to be heavier since the light is striking the sphere on the opposite side. In this case it won't have heaviest line weight on the sphere because the heaviest line weight will be underneath the sphere. Retrace carefully to make the transition gradual. If the transition looks abrupt and choppy, you can fix it by gently erasing with your kneaded eraser and trying again (see Figure 7-30).



**FIGURE 7-30:**  
Finishing the sphere.

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#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Using additive and subtractive drawing techniques to build a full range of values
- » Applying shading techniques to your own drawings
- » Using erasers to create light and shadow
- » Exploring contrast and value in a drawing
- » Combining additive and subtractive techniques to create a realistic drawing of an egg

## Chapter **8**

# Adding Life to Your Drawings with Shading

In drawing, the term *value* refers to the lightness or darkness that appears in the drawing. In essence, value represents the light and shadows you see in the natural world. When it comes to your drawings, you can use value abstractly as an element of composition and/or to show the way light moves through a particular space and to create the illusion of three-dimensional form.

So how do you work with value in your drawings? You use a process called *shading*, which allows you to build or adjust values in your work. You can choose from a variety of techniques that boil down to two basic shading methods, depending on whether you want to build values by adding something to your drawing or by removing something from it. Coincidentally, these two methods are referred to as *additive* and *subtractive* drawing. In general, additive drawing works more efficiently when you're creating a tightly rendered drawing, while subtractive drawing works better when you're creating a more loosely rendered drawing.

In the majority of your drawings, though, you'll use both methods to create the most realistic images. For example, you probably won't finish a subtractive drawing without using an additive drawing technique or two. If you're using an eraser to pull light out of a ground you've toned with a layer of graphite or charcoal, you may need to go back in with a pencil or charcoal to adjust the dark values of that ground. You may also add light to a subtractive drawing by using white charcoal pencil to emphasize the lightness of values you built with an eraser.

In this chapter, I show you various techniques for building value and then describe a painless process for using these techniques in your own drawings. With a little practice, you'll find that adding realistic shading to your drawings is not only possible but also quite fun.

## Taking a Closer Look at Light and Shadow

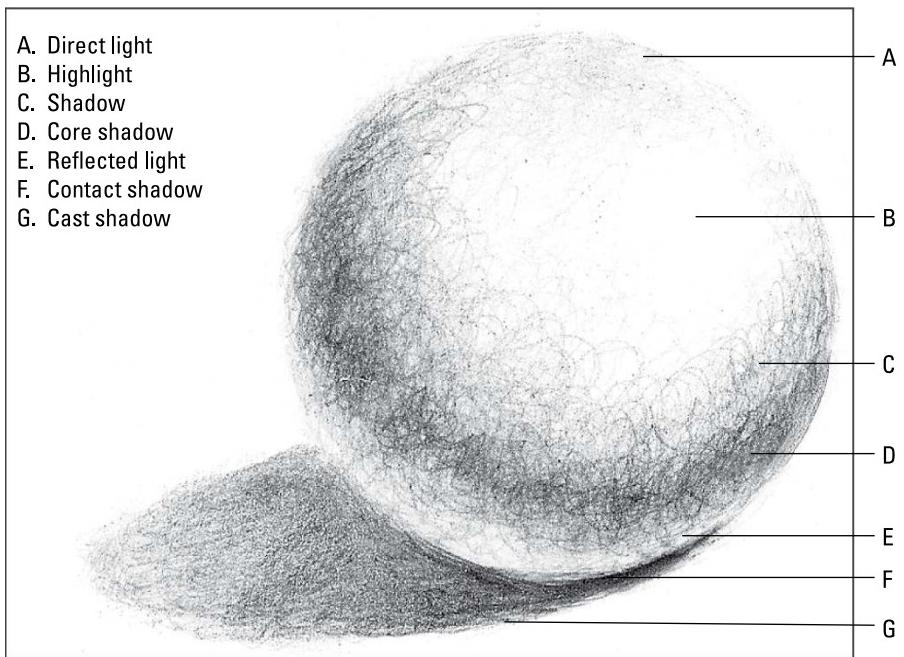
Generally speaking, the values in light areas of drawing subjects are easier to render than the values in areas of shadow. In fact, many times, you can create light values in your drawings simply by leaving the paper white. Shadow areas pose a more complex challenge because they often include several different values; sometimes only subtle changes distinguish one value from another in a given shadow area.

To create a truly realistic illusion, you need to translate the range of values you see in your subject into values in your drawing. To render accurate shadows and light, you need to know what you're looking at (what's light and what's shadow, for example). Figure 8-1 shows the different parts of light and shadow in a drawing; I define each of them here:

- » **Light source:** The direction from which a dominant light originates. The light source determines size, shape, and angle of the shadows. Its placement affects the setting and mood of your drawing.

You can't always tell *what* the light source is, but, you can tell *where* it is. Take a look at the direction of the cast shadow. The location of the light source is directly opposite the direction of the cast shadow. For instance, in Figure 8-1, the cast shadow is angled down toward the lower left and that means the light source is located to the upper right. Identifying the direction of the light source is helpful in troubleshooting the shadows you've drawn. Knowing how the position of a light source impacts the shadows on and cast by an object is helpful when you want to draw from your memory and imagination. If you plan where your light source is, that will help you decide where to locate the shadows and decide what shape(s) they need to be.

- » **Direct light:** The mass of light values. Direct light is any place that's bathed in light.
- » **Highlight:** The lightest light value. Highlights are flecks of strong light that usually appear on reflective surfaces like glass or shiny metal.
- » **Shadow:** The mass of dark values. Shadows appear in any place that's blocked from light.
- » **Core shadow:** A band of shadow that appears only in rounded or cylindrical volumes and that echoes the curves of those volumes. The core shadow is very important to the illusion of roundness.
- » **Reflected light:** Light that reflects from any surface and bounces into a shadow. Reflected light is never as strong as direct light.
- » **Contact shadow:** The thin, very dark shadow between an object and anything an object presses against, for example, the surface on which the object sits. The contact shadow usually looks like a black line underneath objects or between two objects that are pressed together.
- » **Cast shadow:** The shadow thrown onto a surface when an object blocks the light from shining on it.



**FIGURE 8-1:**  
Parts of light and  
shadow in a  
drawing.

Jamie Combs



REMEMBER

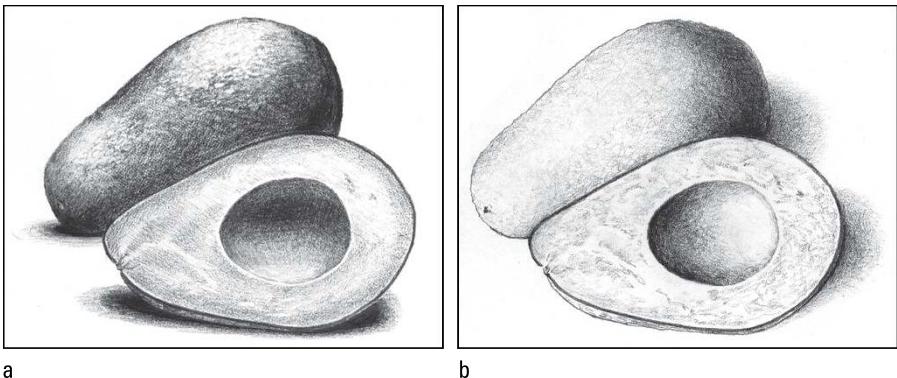
You can't see all the possible parts of light and shadow in every drawing. For instance, the core shadow appears only on rounded volumes. Furthermore, the proximity and intensity of the light impacts the visibility of parts of shadow. When a light source is directly above an object, there might not be a cast shadow. When light is less intense, like on a foggy day, the contrast will be between light and shadow will be lower. When the light is very intense you might now see strong shadows without much variation like in that Baroque painting, Conversion of St. Paul by Caravaggio, where strongly illuminated figures writhe in an atmosphere heavy with dark shadows. More often than not, though, you can see most of them.

Take a look at Figure 8-2 to get some practice with locating the light source, shadows, and cast shadows around an object. As you look at the two drawings in the figure, ask yourself the following questions:

- » **Where are the light values?** Look for the lightest areas on the object. Note the very brightest of the lightest values, or the highlights. In Figure 8-2a, the lightest values are on the cut surface of the avocado to the right and up from the pit cavity. In Figure 8-2b, the lightest values are again on the cut surface of the avocado, but this time, they're to the left of the pit cavity.
- » **Where are the dark values?** Look for the dark values in and around the object; they often reveal the sections of the object that are in shadow. In Figure 8-2a, the shadows are on the right and lower-left sides of the overturned half of avocado and on the upper part of the pit cavity. In Figure 8-2b, the shadows are on the right side of the overturned half of avocado and on the left side of the pit cavity.
- » **Where is the cast shadow?** The section of the cast shadow closest to the object is usually the darkest value in a drawing. In Figure 8-2a, the cast shadows are on the left side of the two avocado halves and on the lower-right side of the front-facing half. In Figure 8-2b, the cast shadows are on the right side of each avocado half.
- » **Where is the light source?** By locating the shadows, particularly the cast shadow, in a drawing, you can usually discover the light source (or at least the direction from which it originates). In Figure 8-2a, the light is coming from the upper right, above and directly opposite the cast shadow. In Figure 8-2b, the cast shadow is also above and directly opposite the cast shadow, but this time it's coming from the upper-left side of the avocado.

Seeing how a light source affects an actual object is more challenging than examining light and shadows in a drawing, but doing so is key to creating realistic, three-dimensional drawings.

**FIGURE 8-2:**  
Looking for light  
and dark values  
and cast  
shadows.



Barbara Frake

To practice seeing light sources like an artist, place an object on a table in a dimly lit room. Shine a powerful flashlight or a lamp (the light source) on the object. Move the light source around to observe the effects of light from different angles. Try putting the lamp to the left and right, above and below, and in front of and behind the object. Each time you reposition the light source, identify the following:

- » The shadows on the object (dark values)
- » The brightest areas (the highlights)
- » The light values (areas closer to the light source, or not in shadow)
- » The cast shadow (the darkest value)

## Practicing Shading Techniques to Create a Range of Values

*Shading* is the process of adding marks to paper for the purpose of adjusting the level of darkness. More specifically, it's the drawing you do when you layer different shades of dark values (using graphite or another drawing medium) over the light values of the white paper. When you use shading techniques, the white of the paper has a strong presence in the drawing because it does the work of supplying the lightest values in your drawing.

In this section, you discover three shading techniques — graduated tone, hatching, and crosshatching — and get to practice using them to create a variety of values. Think of these techniques as tools in your drawing toolbox; you can use any or all of these techniques to render values in your drawings.

## Creating graduated tone

If you want to use shading to make a convincing illusion of an object or environment, one way to do that is to create graduated tones. Graduated tone happens when value shifts are so gradual you can't tell where one value ends and another begins. You can make graduated tones by first creating a light, even, all-over layer of tone and then adding on darker values where you need them through layering. If you do it right, your values will appear to grow naturally, one out of the other.

The graduated tone technique takes patience and consistency. To build values with smooth, even transitions, you need to find a way to move your drawing tool back and forth, smoothly and evenly, without applying any pressure or lifting the tool off the paper. Keeping an even amount of pressure is important. If you press harder in some areas than others, the places where you pressed harder will look darker, interrupting the flow of gradual transitions. Graphite pencils are the easiest tools to use to create graduated tone.



TIP

The easiest way to keep an even pressure as you shade your drawings is to figure out what your natural way of making marks is and stick with it. Your *natural mark* is the kind of mark you can make mindlessly for ten minutes without changing either the size of mark or the pressure on your pencil. Finding your natural mark takes some practice (and — like so many things — patience), but when you get the hang of it, not only will your drawings look even and smooth but you may even find the whole process relaxing.



WARNING

Using the natural mark technique takes tenacity. When you first start practicing it, you may find yourself resistant because of how slowly things change. But if you try to speed up the process by making marks that are faster or longer than what's natural to you, sooner or later your brain and hand will relax to your natural mark, making the size of your marks inconsistent. Relax and give in to the process. Trust me, when you see the final results, you'll be glad you did.



SKETCHBOOK

To see how graduated tone works, gather your 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils and your sketchbook and follow these steps:

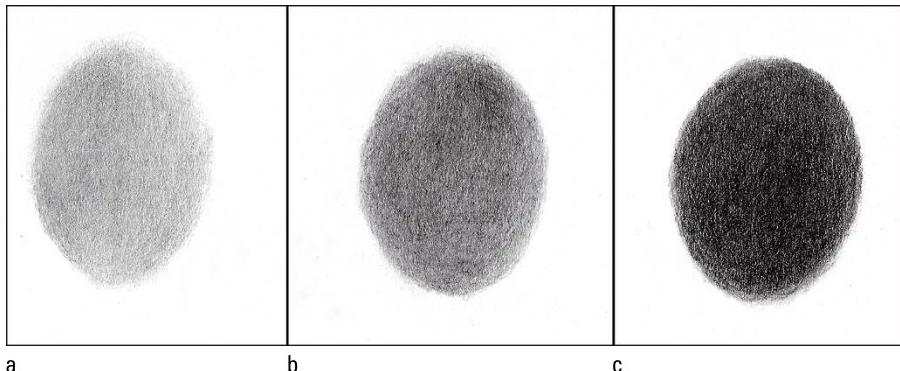
1. Use a ruler and any pencil to draw three 2-x-2-inch squares on a page in your sketchbook.
2. In the first square, move your 2H pencil in a continuous, steady rhythm to create a light, even layer of tone (see Figure 8-3a).
3. Repeat Step 2 exactly for the next two squares so that all three squares look the same.

- 4.** Skipping the first square, use your 2B pencil to add a second, even layer of tone to the last two squares (see Figure 8-3b).

Be sure to use the same even pressure you use in Step 2 for this second layer.

- 5.** Using your 6B pencil, add a final layer of tone to the third square (see Figure 8-3c).

Again, be sure not to change your pressure as you draw this third layer.



**FIGURE 8-3:**  
Creating  
three different  
values using a  
graduated tone.

Jamie Combs

## Trying your hand at hatching and crosshatching

If you're ready to do some shading but you'd like to try out a few more techniques before you start, you're in luck because I cover hatching and crosshatching here. The first technique, called *hatching*, is the process of drawing a series of lines (called a *set*) close together to give the illusion of value. By varying the distance between hatching lines, you can use this very simple method of shading to produce a complete range of values in your drawings.

The second technique, called *crosshatching*, is actually just a variation on hatching. Like hatching, crosshatching is a shading technique that produces a complete range of values. The key difference is that, in crosshatching, you use two or more sets of hatching lines that cross over each other (hence the name).



REMEMBER

The following three factors affect the darkness or lightness of the value you create with hatching and crosshatching:

» **How close the lines are to each other:** In general, the closer the lines are to each other, the darker the value.

- » **How you hold your drawing medium:** The harder you press and the tighter you grip your pencil, the darker the value. To achieve a lighter value, all you have to do is press down a little more lightly and loosen your grip.
- » **What kind of drawing medium you use:** Some pencils just lend themselves to making light marks. For example, the 2H is great for light marks. On the other hand, the 2B is a natural tool for making medium values, and the 6B makes great dark values. Check out Chapter 3 to see the full range of values created by four different pencils.

The following sections show you how to use the hatching and crosshatching techniques to achieve just the right value in your drawings.

## Draw different shades of value with hatching lines



SKETCHBOOK

Practicing the hatching technique is as easy as drawing a set of lines. To get started, grab your sketchbook and 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils. Then follow these steps to create three sets of hatching lines, each one with a different value:

1. Use a ruler and any pencil to draw three 2-x-2-inch squares on a page in your sketchbook.
2. In the first square, use your 2H pencil and a light, steady pressure to draw a set of parallel lines that are far apart from each other (see Figure 8-4a).
3. In the second square, use your 2B pencil and the same light, steady pressure you used in Step 2 to draw a set of parallel lines that are closer together than the lines you drew in Step 2 (see Figure 8-4b).

The old expression *few and far between* works well here. The lines you draw in this step should be far apart and few in number.

4. In the third square, use a sharp 6B pencil and a light, steady pressure to draw a set of hatching lines that are even closer together than the lines you drew in Step 3 (see Figure 8-4c).

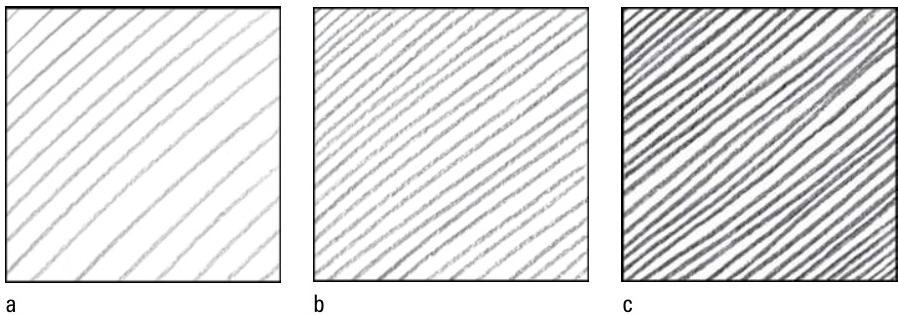
When you draw each set in this exercise, make sure to draw with the same light, even pressure. That way, you can see the range of values you get just by switching to softer pencils.

Notice that the third set has more lines than my first set and that the value of this set is darker and heavier.



REMEMBER

Notice that the third set has more lines that are much closer together than the lines in the second set and that the value of this set is very dark.



**FIGURE 8-4:**  
Creating three  
different values  
using hatching.

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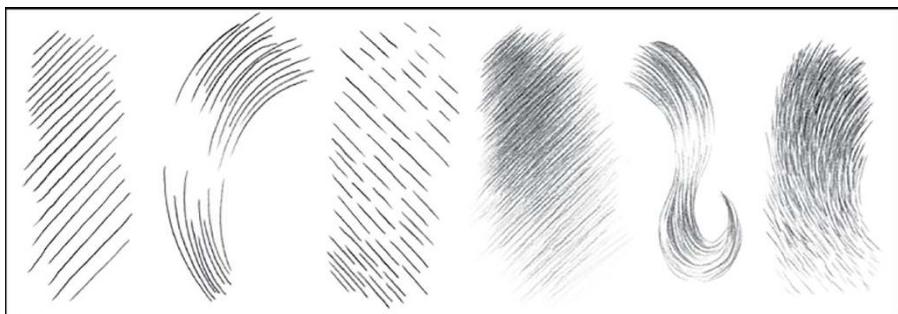


TIP

When you start hatching, try out several different ways of moving your pencil or changing the angle of your lines until you find the motions that are the most natural for you. For instance, you may decide to draw the first line in the upper-left corner and continue making lines until you get to the lower-right corner. Experiment with different directions and angles until you find what's comfortable for you.

Keep in mind that your hatching marks don't always have to be plain straight lines. Different styles of hatching marks lend different moods to your drawings. Figure 8-5 shows a small sampling of six hatching styles, including both curved and straight lines. Some styles have long or short lines or even combinations of different lengths. Some styles also have noticeable spaces between the lines, while others have lines that are very close together (see Chapter 9 for an in-depth discussion of the way different kinds of hatching can be useful in creating different kinds of textures).

In Figure 8-5, notice the textures you can create just by using different hatching styles. Some have hairy textures, while others have more jagged or rough textures (check out Chapter 9 for a lot more about textures). Imagine all the different ways you could use these hatching styles in your drawings!



**FIGURE 8-5:**  
Making different  
hatching marks.

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Take a few minutes to draw some different types of hatching lines in your sketchbook. For inspiration, look at some of the drawings throughout this book, taking note of the different ways the artists use hatching. (*Hint:* Take a closer look at the fur on the animals!)

## Draw crosshatching lines



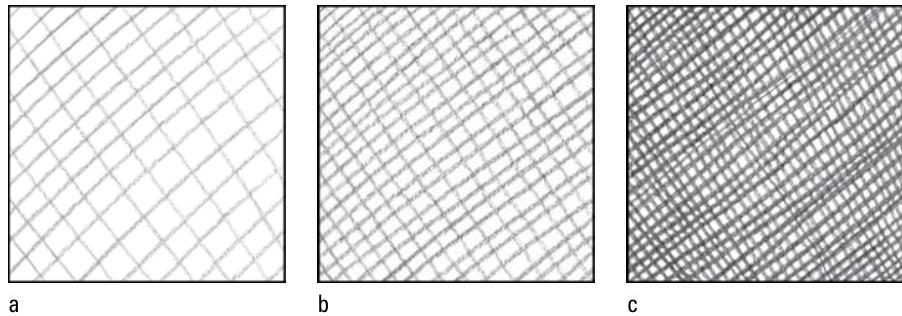
SKETCHBOOK

To try your hand at drawing crosshatching lines, grab your sketchbook and 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils and then follow these steps to create three sets of lines, each with a different value:

1. Use a ruler and any pencil to draw three 2-x-2-inch squares on a page of your sketchbook.
2. In the first square, press lightly with your 2H pencil to draw a set of parallel lines that are far apart from each other; then draw a second set of parallel lines that cross over the first set (see Figure 8-6a).  
Notice that your two sets of hatching lines become a crosshatching set in this step.
3. In the second square, press harder with your 2B pencil to draw a set of parallel lines that are closer together than the lines you drew in Step 2; then draw a second set of parallel lines that cross over the first set (see Figure 8-6b).  
Notice that the lines in this square are darker than the ones in the first square.
4. In the third square, use your 6B pencil and press a little harder to draw two overlapping sets of parallel lines that are even closer together than the ones you drew in Step 3 (see Figure 8-6c).



WARNING



**FIGURE 8-6:**  
Creating  
three  
different  
values  
using  
crosshatching.

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When it comes to crosshatching, your sets of overlapping lines can cross over each other at any angle. In fact, it's perfectly fine to use lines that cross over each other at various angles within the same drawing.



TIP

The best angle to use when you're crosshatching' is always the one that works best for you. Experiment with drawing different styles of crosshatching lines until you discover which angles you prefer. Figure 8-7 shows you ten examples of different ways you can use crosshatching, but I bet you can come up with ten more.

One of the best uses for crosshatching is creating the illusion of three-dimensional form. You can draw the crosshatching marks so that they form a mesh-like structure of shadows that rises and falls with the swells and valleys of a particular form's contours. Line weight variation can come into play here, too. Combining line weight variation with crosshatching allows you to sculpt the volume of the object with the direction of the lines with greater impact because it shows what the light and shadow are like. Lighter lines show where the object is bathed in light and heavier lines show where the volume of the object is blocked from the light. You can even use heavier line weight to create a core shadow.

The simple egg-like structure in the bottom row of Figure 8-7 shows you what I mean. When you need your lines to conform to the contours of a complex curving form, allow the form itself to dictate the angles at which your hatching lines cross over each other.



**FIGURE 8-7:**  
Different styles of  
crosshatching  
lines.

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Artists often use both hatching and crosshatching techniques in the same drawing to achieve just the right value. For a wonderful art-historical example, type *Rembrandt elephant drawings* into your favorite search engine. In the image results, notice how Rembrandt used a variety of hatching and crosshatching marks to render the beautiful and extremely realistic folds of baggy elephant flesh in his drawings.

## Scaling from light to dark

The key to realistic drawing is achieving a full range of values (in other words, a complete scale of lights and darks). To create a full range of values in each of your drawings, you need to be able to control your drawing medium. Lucky for you, I'm here to help you do just that. Hatching, crosshatching, and graduated tone are all great techniques for creating a wide range of values.

**Note:** In this section, you see an example of how you can use crosshatching to create a full scale of values from light to dark. After you follow along with the steps described here, you can practice using hatching and graduated tone techniques to do the same thing.



TIP

If you're having trouble visualizing what I mean by *full scale of values*, look closely at a black-and-white image (either a paused movie frame or a photograph). Find the darkest dark and the lightest light in the image. How many variations of light and dark do you see? Are you surprised by how many subtle grays actually exist between white and black? All those subtle grays combined with the lightest lights and the darkest darks make up the full scale of values in the image.

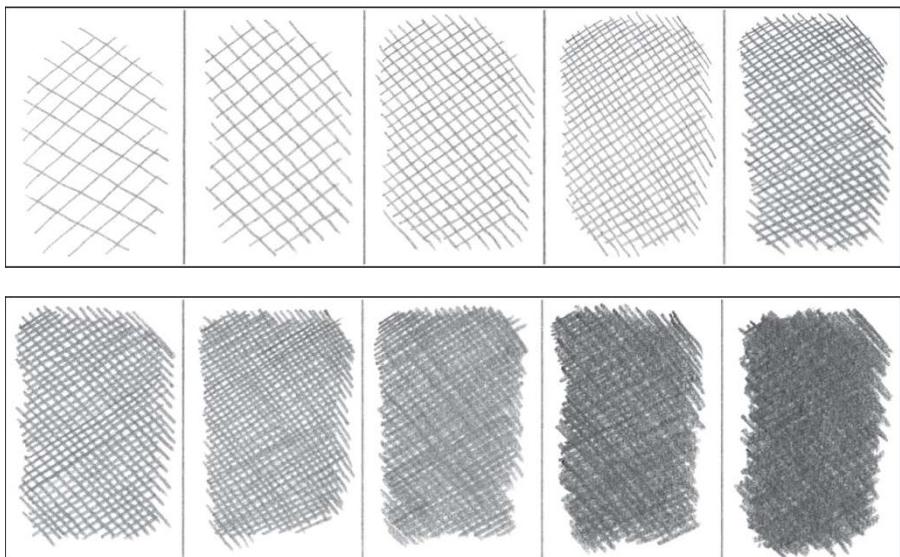


SKETCHBOOK

To practice making a full range of values using the crosshatching technique, grab your sketchbook, a ruler, and your 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils; then follow these steps:

1. Use your ruler and any pencil to draw two 2-x-5-inch rectangles horizontally on your paper; divide each rectangle into five equal boxes (see Figure 8-8).
2. With your 2H pencil, use a light, even pressure to make a patch of crosshatching marks in the first box.
3. Switch to your 2B pencil and, with the same light, even pressure, make the same kind of crosshatching marks you made in Step 2 in the second box, except make your marks a little closer together.
4. Use your 2B pencil and apply the same even pressure to make the same kind of crosshatching marks you made in Steps 2 and 3 in the third and fourth boxes; for each rectangle, make the marks a little closer together (refer to Figure 8-8).

- Exert a little more pressure on your 2B pencil to draw crosshatching marks that are closer together and darker in the fifth and sixth rectangles.
- Use your 6B pencil to make crosshatching marks in the seventh through tenth rectangles; for each rectangle, increase your pressure on the pencil and the density of the marks.



**FIGURE 8-8:**  
Crosshatching ten shades of gray.

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## Using hatching to make graduated values

In drawing, a *graduation* is a continuous progression of values; these progressing values are often called *graduated values*. You can use any of the techniques described in this chapter to create graduated values.

To get a better idea of what graduation is, imagine that all the values in Figure 8-8 are flowing into one continuous stream, in which the values gradually change from one to the next without any break. The transition of values in a graduation can be from either dark to light or light to dark.



REMEMBER

When it comes to graduations, your goal is to keep the transition between the values as seamless as possible. To do so, you need to make gradual changes in the way you work as you progress through a drawing.



SKETCHBOOK

Sound complicated? Well, don't panic. I show you how to render graduated values in this exercise. Gather up your 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils and your sketchbook and follow these simple steps:

- 1. In your sketchbook, draw a long rectangle that's about 1½ inches wide and 6 inches long.**
- 2. On the left side of your rectangle, press very lightly with your 2H pencil to draw the lightest values in your graduation.**

Make your hatching marks in whatever direction feels comfortable to you. If you're left-handed, you may find it easier to work from right to left. Don't worry, though, you can still start with the lightest marks and work toward the darkest.
- 3. Move your pencil to the right, gradually pressing harder on your pencil and making your hatching lines closer together (see Figure 8-9).**



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- 4. When you hit a plateau and your marks don't seem to be getting darker, switch to your 2B pencil and add the medium values by gradually pressing harder and making your hatching lines closer together as you move to the right (see Figure 8-10).**

Remember to keep the pressure light and even at first, gradually increasing pressure as you move along.



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5. When your medium marks don't seem to be getting darker, switch to your 6B pencil and begin making marks that slightly overlap the last medium ones; gradually press harder until the end of your graduation is very dark (see Figure 8-11).

Make sure your pencil is sharpened for this step. Remember to use light pressure at first and then adjust your pressure until your marks are noticeably darker.



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**FIGURE 8-11:**  
Adding the  
darkest values of  
a hatching  
graduation.



REMEMBER

If you notice that the transition between your values isn't as smooth as you'd like it to be, you can improve it. Try adding a few more short hatching lines in between some of your lines. Use your location in the graduation as a guide to help you decide which pencil to use. For example, if you need to add lines to smooth a transition near the beginning of the graduation, use your 2H pencil. (If you tried to use your 6B pencil, your transition would be even less smooth than it was before you tried to improve it!)



TIP

Resist the temptation to use your fingers to smudge your values together. Smudging with your fingers feels satisfying at first because it rubs out the texture, but anyone who's tried smudging knows that although the end result looks okay, it isn't as smooth as you'd like it to be. The problem is that you can't control the way the graphite spreads out when you smudge with your fingers. The graphite deposits unevenly beneath your fingers, and you end up with distracting splotches instead of a smooth transition of value. If you want to smooth out the graphite texture in your drawing you could try using a tool designed for this purpose. You can find blending stumps or paper tortillons at an art supply store or online. Beware, blending is something that should be done sparingly. Over-blending can rub the vitality out of your drawing. You can get the smooth, velvety look you're after without the deadening effects of over-blending by carefully building up a graduated tone. See the section on graduated tone earlier in this chapter.

# Using Your Eraser to “Draw” Light

When you think about drawing something, methods like the ones covered in the previous sections are probably the first to come to mind. But I’m here to tell you about another interesting way to draw — via subtractive drawing. *Subtractive drawing* is drawing by *erasing*. Basically, this process involves using an eraser on a piece of paper toned with graphite or charcoal to “draw” the light values of your drawing. In this way, you build values in your drawing by subtracting.

Before you can try out subtractive drawing, you need to tone your paper. *Toning your paper* means applying a layer of removable drawing media (powdered graphite or powdered charcoal works best) to your whole drawing space. To do so, use your powdered medium to completely cover your paper and then gently smooth the graphite or charcoal by rubbing it with a tissue or paper towel. Don’t worry about making the tone look completely smooth. You’re going to mess the surface up later in the subtractive process anyway. All you need to do is make sure the white of the paper isn’t visible.



TIP

If you can’t find powdered graphite or charcoal at your local art supply store or you just don’t want to spend money on them, you can make your own. Simply rub pencils or charcoal sticks across sandpaper and let the dust fall on the paper you want to tone. If that sounds like too much trouble, you can also use soft graphite in sticks or pencils (6B or softer), soft vine charcoal, or compressed charcoal sticks. (See Chapter 3 for more details on different drawing media.)

When you’re ready to try out subtractive drawing to pull light out of your toned paper, you need one or both of these erasers:

- » **Vinyl eraser:** This eraser works well for removing large areas of light value. If the edge of your vinyl eraser gets too dirty to remove graphite or charcoal, simply rub the eraser on a clean piece of paper or cut a small slice off the end of it with a very sharp blade or knife. This type of eraser also comes in a retractable stick form. Stick erasers come in a variety of widths for varying degrees of detail. They’re great because you can hold them like a pencil and that gives you a lot of control. You can find stick erasers online or at an art supply store.
- » **Kneaded eraser:** This eraser is great for lifting small shapes out of graphite or charcoal. To do so, you can either pat or gently rub the surface of your paper. To draw fine detail, simply mold its tip to a point. To clean your kneaded eraser, just stretch and reshape it several times until it comes clean (this process is called *kneading*).



For this exercise, you need powdered graphite or charcoal (see the previous tip for ideas about how to make your own) tissues or paper towels, your sketchbook, a kneaded eraser, and a vinyl eraser. When you have everything ready to go, follow these steps:

- 1. Draw a 6-x-6-inch square in your sketchbook and sprinkle lightly with powdered graphite or charcoal.**
- 2. Use a tissue or paper towel to rub the graphite around until the white of the paper is no longer visible (see Figure 8-12a).**

You don't have to make the graphite look perfectly even.
- 3. Using your vinyl eraser, practice pulling graphite out of your drawing (see Figure 8-12b).**

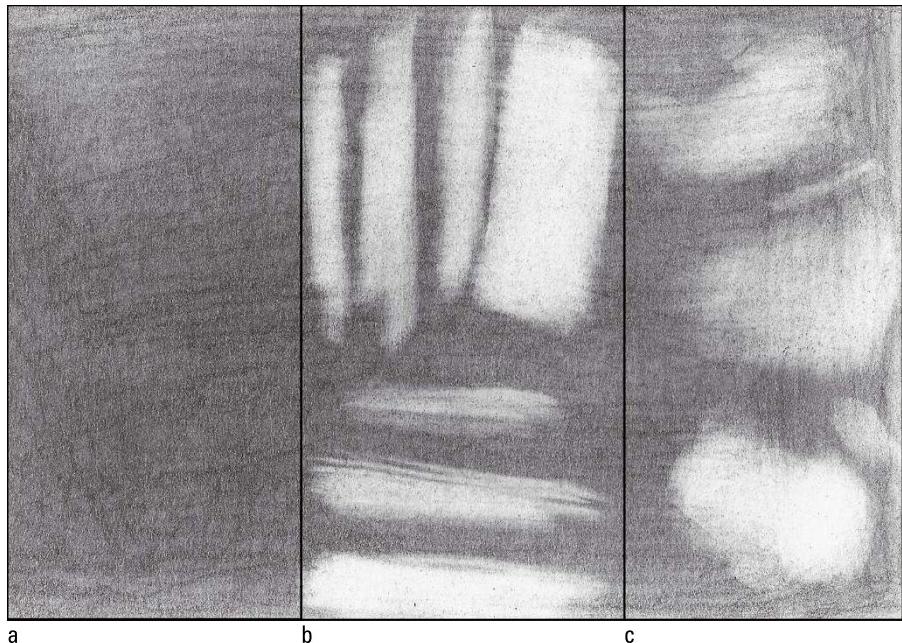
For this step, hold the eraser like you would if you were going to erase a mistake; use it to stroke the paper.

Try using different edges and corners of the eraser to see the different types of marks you can make. Vary the pressure you put on the eraser. Begin drawing lightly with your eraser and then see what happens when you increase the pressure.

- 4. Using your kneaded eraser, practice pulling graphite out of your drawing by daubing the eraser on the paper (see Figure 8-12c).**

Try making a variety of marks with your kneaded eraser. See what it looks like when you tap the eraser on the paper compared to what it looks like when you rub the paper with the eraser. Experiment with the amount of pressure you exert on the eraser.

Frequently, when you adjust the light values in a drawing, you'll notice dark values need to be adjusted, too. To do so, just use one or more of the shading techniques covered in the earlier section "Practicing Shading Techniques to Create a Range of Values." Subtractive drawing is unique because it compels you to think about the back-and-forth nature of making a drawing.



**FIGURE 8-12:**  
Using erasers to  
add light values  
to toned paper.

*Jamie Combs*

## Working with Value

Value is an exciting element of drawing. It can also be daunting. There is a lot to think about. In this section, you learn about different kinds of contrast in drawing and why you might choose one over another. You find some strategies for simplifying the values you see into a manageable range and ideas for translating color into value. Finally, you learn about an order of operations to use when working with value in your drawings.

### Exploring contrast in a drawing

*Value contrast* is the play of lights and darks in a drawing. As you may have guessed, achieving good value contrast is important to creating realistic illusions of volume and depth, but value contrast itself is also a powerful emotive element in a drawing. Like it does in a play or movie, lighting helps create setting and mood in a drawing. The three main types of value contrast are

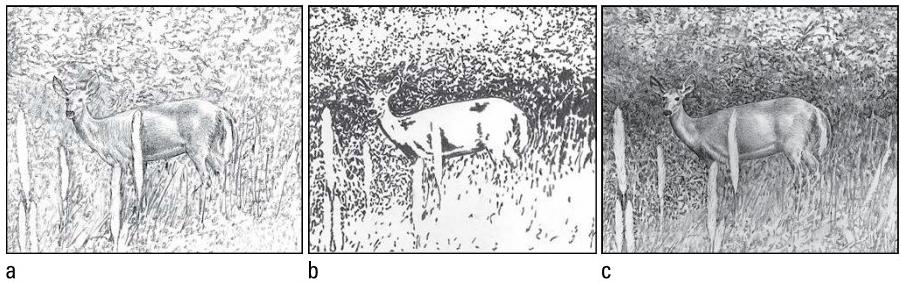
- » **Low:** Low-contrast drawings have mostly values that are close together. Foggy or hazy days are good examples of low-contrast situations.

- » **High:** *High-contrast* drawings have mostly values in the extreme ranges — very light and very dark. Circuses and nighttime scenes flooded with city lights are good examples of high-contrast situations.
- » **Full-value:** *Full-value* drawings have values that are extremes of light and dark as well as all the values in between. All you need is typical daylight or interior lighting, and you have a situation that demands a full spectrum of value.

So what kind of contrast creates the most realistic drawings? The answer is simple: all three. The key to realism is getting the value relationships in your drawing to look like they do in real life. If you see shadows next to light in your subject, draw shadows next to light on your paper. As you draw, make comparisons between your drawing and your subject to see whether you're creating a level of contrast that matches your intent. If you haven't yet, make the necessary adjustments.

Figure 8-13 shows you one subject under three different levels of contrast. Notice how the setting and mood seem to change with the contrast. In the low-contrast drawing in Figure 8-13, it appears to be a bright, warm day. The air is filled with light. In the high-contrast drawing in Figure 8-13b, the feeling is a little cooler, and the shadows create a sense that it's later in the day. In the full-value contrast drawing in Figure 8-13c, you can see that the shadows play against a bright light, thus depicting a sunny afternoon.

**FIGURE 8-13:**  
Low contrast,  
high contrast,  
and  
full-value  
contrast.



*Barbara Frake*

## Squinting to translate vision into values

The range of values you see in any given subject can make you feel overwhelmed at the prospect of trying to draw it. After all, almost every subject has more than one value. Under normal circumstances, most things have some areas that are very light and others that are quite dark. For example, if you look closely at a mound of dark earth, you notice that it has several different values. If a fresh layer of bright-white snow covered the dirt mound, you'd still see lots of values. So how do you represent all those values on paper?

To make the process of capturing the full range of values in your drawings more manageable, you can simplify your subject into the basic value shapes that make it up. A *value shape* is the shape of an area of value. For example, imagine that a field of grass is all one value except for a few long rectangular shadows being cast on it by telephone poles. Each rectangular shadow is a value shape. The lighter shapes of the grass surrounding the shadows are also value shapes. One funny-sounding but helpful strategy for simplifying values into shapes is squinting. Read on to find out how to use this technique to draw your way to a full range of value.

## See simple value shapes

Squinting helps you screen out details in your subject so you can more easily see — and draw — the basic value shapes (the large areas of light values and dark values that make up the bulk of the drawing subject). To better understand the concept of basic value shapes, consider the crescent moon in the sky. If you look carefully at the surface of the moon, you can see evidence of the surface texture. If you squint instead, the surface details disappear and all you notice are the simple value shapes: the light shape of the crescent moon and the dark shape of the sky.

The surface details you see when you stare at the moon are smaller value shapes within the larger shape (think about the craters that make up the face of the moon). When you start with the big simple shapes, it is easier to manage the smaller details within the larger shapes.

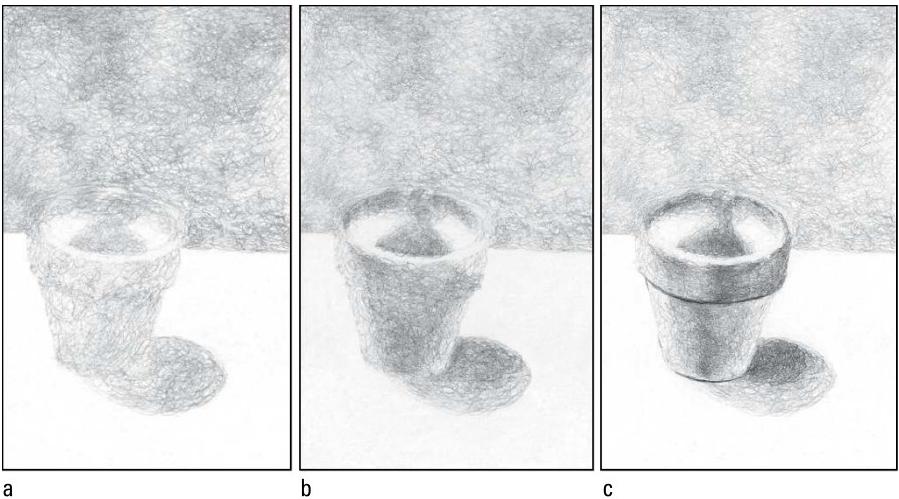


TIP

Whenever you draw, try to simplify your subject as much as possible by squinting; that way, you can work out the basic value shapes of your subject before you try to tackle the smaller value shapes. For example, you can draw a nose a lot more easily when you start by drawing its largest, most basic shadow shapes like the ones you can usually find beneath the nose and along one or both sides of the nose and then moving on to smaller shadow shapes like the ones that make up the nostrils. By the time you're finished adding both basic and smaller value shapes, you'll have a complete, full-value drawing. (See Chapter 13 for more on drawing noses.)

Figure 8-14 shows you three stages of a drawing that the artist created using the squinting technique. The first stage (shown in Figure 8-14a) shows the simple value shapes in the subject. The second stage (shown in Figure 8-14b) shows the drawing after the artist added the next-darker value. The third stage (shown in Figure 8-14c) shows the final drawing. Squint at the third drawing and compare it to the first two drawings. Notice the difference in detail and value between the drawings.

**FIGURE 8-14:**  
Squinting to see  
value shapes.



— Jamie Combs

## Turn colors into values

Many drawing media, such as graphite and charcoal, are designed for black-and-white drawings. Yet, almost everything in the world is in color. To create the most realistic drawings, you need to adjust your visual perceptions to see all the colors in your subjects as shades of gray.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could simply press a button in the middle of your forehead and magically transform the world from full color to gray? A button like that would certainly make drawing easier, but, it isn't likely to hit markets any time soon. No worries. You can develop your own color-to-gray skill just by squinting.



TIP

Look around at different objects. Try to notice whether an object is light or dark instead of looking at its color. Concentrate on the light and shadows; then squint until you see the values of that object. Think about where the lights and darks are and how you could draw them with your drawing medium of choice. If you can't decide what the value of something is, compare it to the lightest and darkest values you see. Don't get discouraged if you can't see your subjects in lights and darks right away. With practice, you'll get better.

Sometimes translating colors into values is easy. For example, if your subject has light-pink and dark-red stripes, you can simply draw the dark red as a dark value and the pink as a light value. Other times, however, translating colors into values is a little trickier.

Brightness gets in the way of being able to assess its value. Brightness is actually saturation but it can fool your eye into thinking it is lightness. For example, a saturated, fire engine red and a saturated sunflower yellow are different values but their brightness can trick you into thinking they are the same. Furthermore, what you know about a color can get in the way of being able to see it. If you have a teapot that is yellow, it's reasonable to assume that its local value is light. However, the context that you put the teapot in can change that. If you set the teapot on a dimly lit shelf, you might be surprised at how dark its value appears in that context.

In both of these cases, the best way to help yourself is to make comparisons. Look for something nearby that is objectively the lightest value you can see and then find something that is objectively the darkest. Use these two polar values as points of comparison for the other values in your subject. Occasionally you will have to fudge the truth about values a little bit for the sake of your drawing. For example, if your subject has stripes of dark green and dark red, you need to pick one to be a lighter value. Otherwise, you'll end up drawing a solid tone rather than stripes.



TIP

To help you create realistic values, identify the lightest value and the darkest value in your subject before you start shading a drawing. You can use these values as reference points against which you can measure the rest of your values.

The following sections show you how to use the shading techniques you learned in this chapter together with the practice of simplifying what you see into shapes of value to create a realistic drawing with a wide range of value.

## Blocking in your basic values

So you want to achieve a full range of values in your drawing. The best way to do so is to begin simply by breaking the values of your subject down into what's generally light and what's generally dark.

Whether you're drawing from life or from your imagination, it's a good idea to simplify the values into basic light and basic dark. Exactly how you determine the different values in your drawing depends on the inspiration behind your drawing. So before you start shading, do the following:

**» If you're drawing from life, spend some time looking at your subject to analyze its values.** Look at a subject you want to draw and imagine that you have only two values — light and dark — to choose from. Take a mental walk around your subject and sort each part into either light or dark. If you have



TIP

Because real life exists in an infinite range of values between white and black, you need to include a wide range of those values to make your drawing look realistic. Although the infinite possibilities out there may seem overwhelming, if you begin breaking apart your drawing by using one middle-gray value to block in all the dark values and leave the light areas alone (so they're the white of the paper), you can quickly and efficiently get a sense of the whole drawing in terms of what's light and what's dark. At that point, you can begin to darken and lighten the gray and white spots as needed.

## Refining your values

After you block in the simple layout of lights and darks in your drawing, notice that your drawing looks pretty flat. To liven it up, you need to add *volume*, which is the illusion of three-dimensionality. (I explain how light creates the illusion of the third dimension in Chapter 7.) You can do so by adjusting your values.



REMEMBER

As you begin to refine your values, think about making simple, gradual changes and keep in mind the following guidelines:

- » **Work from light to dark.** By drawing your light values first, you can then layer your medium shading on top of your light shading, creating a nice, smooth transition between different values.
- » **When you work on the light areas, pay attention to where the strongest lights are.** Add varying degrees of shading to everything in the light area that isn't as light as the strongest light.

» **Work from the middle of the dark values and gradually get darker.** Hold back on the darkest darks until the end. You can then build the darkest values in layers on top of the medium values.



WARNING

Don't press too hard with your pencils as you refine your values. Not only do these areas become impossible to touch up, but you also leave dents in your paper. When you try to draw over dents in the paper with a soft pencil, such as a 2B or 6B, the dents show up as light lines, spoiling the overall appearance of your drawing. If you feel yourself pressing too hard, switch to a darker pencil, perhaps a 4B or 6B.

If you're working from a real-life subject, look at it closely to see which areas you need to make darker and which ones you need to make lighter. Locate the darkest dark and the lightest light on the subject and compare those spots to your drawing. If you see an especially dark area in your drawing, check it against the darkest dark in your subject and ask yourself, "How close is this dark to the darkest dark?" If you aren't sure how much darker your drawing needs to be, error on the lighter side; you can always get darker. The more closely your values mirror the ones you see in your subject, the more believable your drawing will look when you're finished.

If you're working from your imagination, refining values is trickier. Turn to Chapter 7 for tips on how to build realistic volumes.

## Project: Drawing an Egg

Believe it or not, eggs aren't quite as easy to draw as they look. It's tough giving them life on the page. In this project, I show you how to use shading to add volume to this familiar oval shape. This project uses continuous tone to add shading, but you can use any of the techniques described in the section, "Practicing shading techniques to create a range of values," earlier in this chapter. In fact, you may want to try all of them.

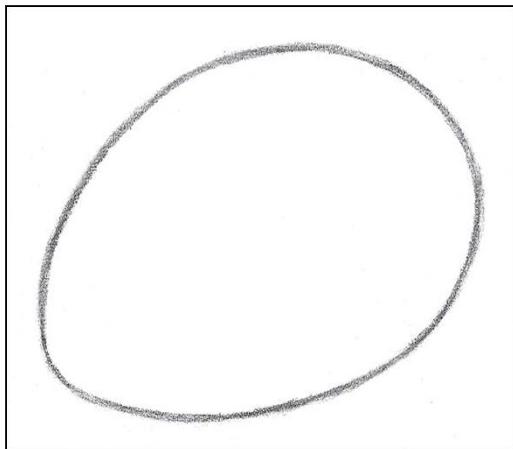


SKETCHBOOK

Before you get started, grab an egg and set it in front of you so that you can see it easily. Shine a strong light on it. You can use light from a sunny window, a desk lamp, a clamp light, or another source you have handy. (See Chapter 10 for more ideas on how to add lighting to your still life subjects.) Grab your sketchbook, erasers, and 2H, 2B, and 6B pencils; then follow these steps:

1. Use a 2H pencil to draw a simple, light line that outlines the shape of the egg (see Figure 8-15).
2. Look at the subject and mentally sort the values into darks and lights.

Don't forget about the values on the surface beneath the egg.



**FIGURE 8-15:**  
Drawing the basic  
shape of an egg.

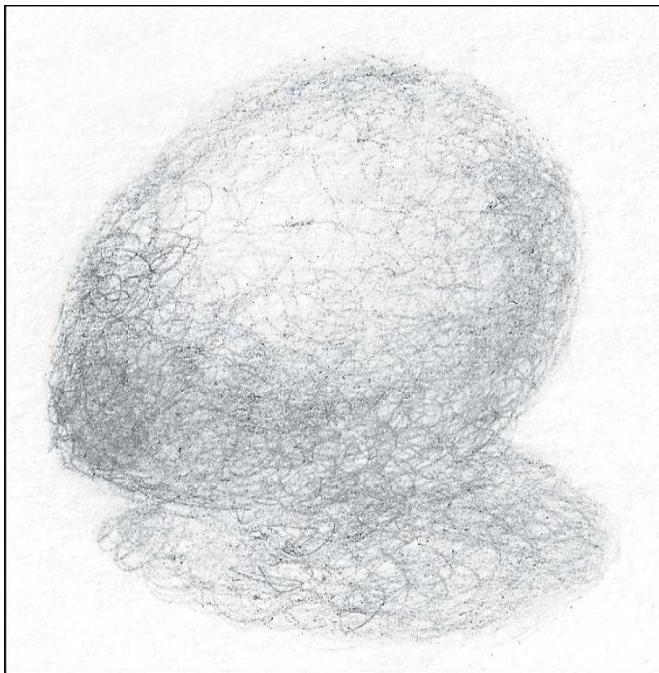
*Jamie Combs*

3. Use a 2H pencil to block in the dark values (see Figure 8-16).

Figure 8-16 shows what the dark values look like using graduated tone, but you can also use hatching or crosshatching. If you use graduated tone, remember to find your natural mark and to use a light, even pressure to build value on the dark part of your egg and the shadows underneath (see the earlier section "Creating graduated tone" for more details).

Check out the earlier section "Blocking in your basic values" for info on how to block in values in your drawing.

4. Use a kneaded eraser to lighten the line around the contour of the egg.
5. Press lightly with a 2H pencil to build value into the light parts of your egg and the surface on which the egg sits.



**FIGURE 8-16:**  
Blocking in the  
dark values.

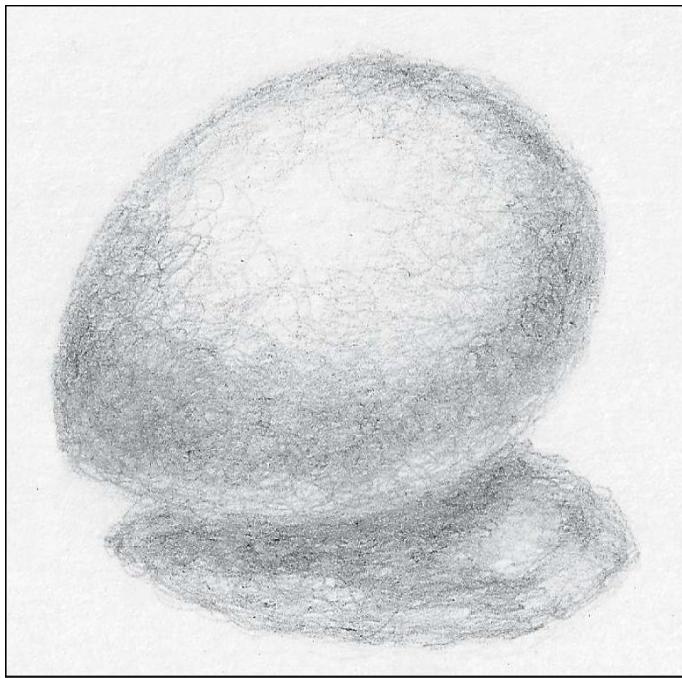
*Jamie Combs*

6. **Switch to a 2B pencil and build another even layer of shading over the dark values of the drawing (see Figure 8-17).**
7. **Analyze the values of your subject and refine the values in your drawing by using your 2H pencil to adjust light values and your 2B pencil to adjust dark values.**

For example, look at the shadows in Figure 8-17. All the shadowy areas are dark, but some parts of the shadows are darker than others. Using a 6B pencil, refine the values of those shadows by building an even layer of shading on the areas of darker value within the dark areas (see Figure 8-18).

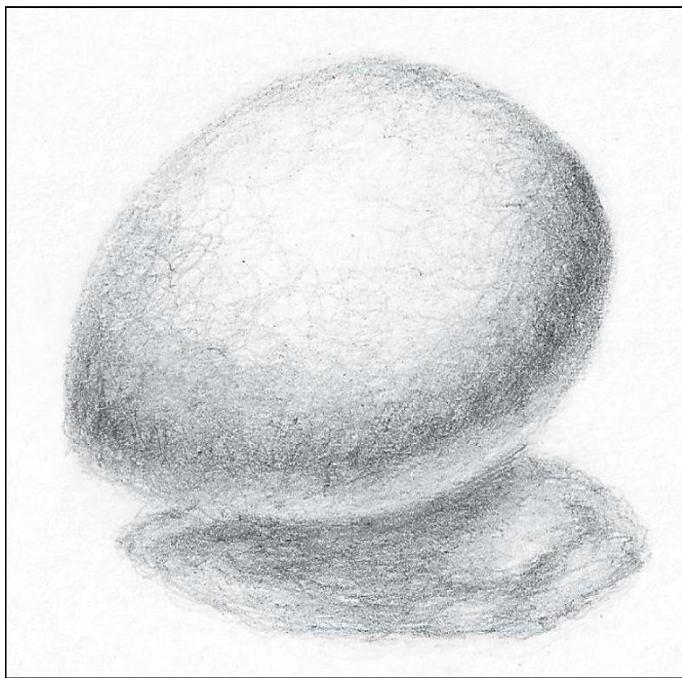
8. **If the lightest part of your subject has become covered with graphite, use your kneaded eraser to daub away the graphite (refer to Figure 8-18).**
9. **Use your 6B pencil to add the darkest dark to your drawing (see Figure 8-19).**

A good place to look for the darkest dark is in the contact shadow, which is the line between an object and any surface on which it sits or with which it comes into contact. In Figure 8-19, the contact shadow is beneath the egg.



**FIGURE 8-17:**  
Building value  
into the light  
parts of your egg.

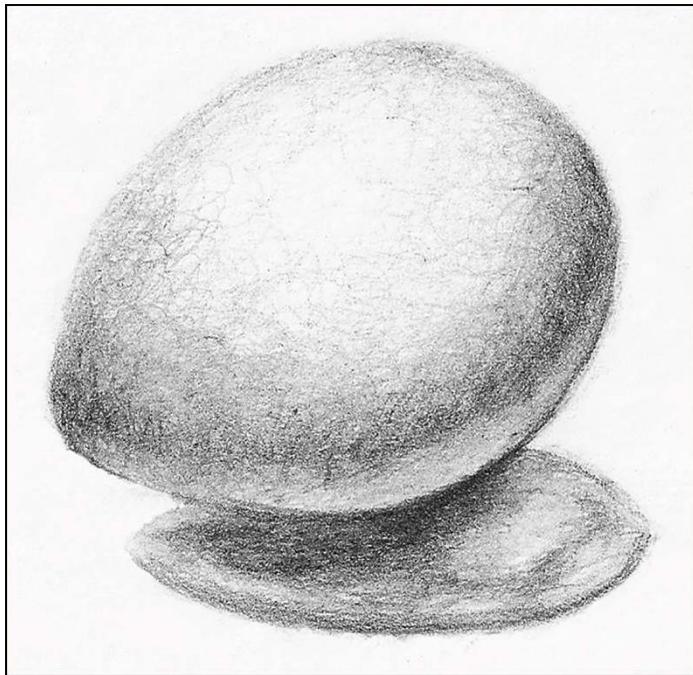
*Jamie Combs*



**FIGURE 8-18:**  
Building more  
value in your  
drawing.

*Jamie Combs*

**FIGURE 8-19:**  
The finished egg  
with the darkest  
values appearing  
in the contact  
shadow.



*Jamie Combs*

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding the difference between textures and patterns
- » Identifying different textures
- » Creating textured drawings
- » Planning and rendering textures in your own drawings and in two hands-on projects

## Chapter 9

# Identifying and Rendering Textures

Textures provide vital information about your drawing subjects, such as whether their surfaces are smooth, shiny, rough, or fuzzy. It takes commitment to draw textures convincingly and to create the illusion that an animal is furry, a human face is smooth, or an eye is glistening. Once you understand how textures work, you can get creative and have fun with textures by drawing something unexpected like a fluffy snake.

This chapter shows you several examples of textures you may want to incorporate into your drawings and walks you through the process of planning and then drawing them. It finishes up with a couple of texture-inspired projects to help you practice your new skills.

## Seeing — and Feeling — Textures



TIP

People often use the words *texture* and *pattern* interchangeably when describing the surface of an object. There is no need to try to make a once-and-for-all declaration about the difference between the two. For the purposes of this chapter, when I talk about *texture*, I am describing something that is tactile, such as the

velvety texture of a tiger's body. When I use the word *pattern*, I am talking about a visual characteristic defined by regular repetition of a motif such as stripes.

Here are two helpful definitions to refer to as you move through this chapter:

- » **Texture:** Tactile surface detail that tells your eyes what an object would feel like if you touched it (fuzzy, smooth, bumpy, or hairy, for example)
- » **Pattern:** Flat design defined by the regular repetition of a motif (stripes), reticulation (like a giraffe's skin, checkerboard, plaid, or polka-dots, for example)

Keep in mind that an object can — and often does — have both pattern and texture. For example, a smooth, glazed porcelain cup can have a pattern of stripes and a shiny texture. A wool sweater can have a striped pattern, but its texture isn't the stripes. The texture is how the sweater feels (bumpy, smooth, soft, or fuzzy). Figure 9-1 shows two different examples of striped textures: Figure 9-1a has a furry texture, while Figure 9-1b has a smooth texture.

When you're dealing with patterned textures in your drawings, consider both the pattern and the texture before you decide how to do the shading. For example, if you're drawing a zebra, consider that the pattern of its fur is striped while the texture is furry (see Figure 9-1a). To create the striped pattern, you need to draw the dark stripes with dark values and the light stripes with light values. To create the illusion of a furry texture, move your pencil in a way that responds to how the fur feels while you're shading the stripes. (A *hatching* technique is great for fur or hair because it involves drawing a series of curved or straight lines that can be any length you need. Learn more about hatching in Chapter 8.)

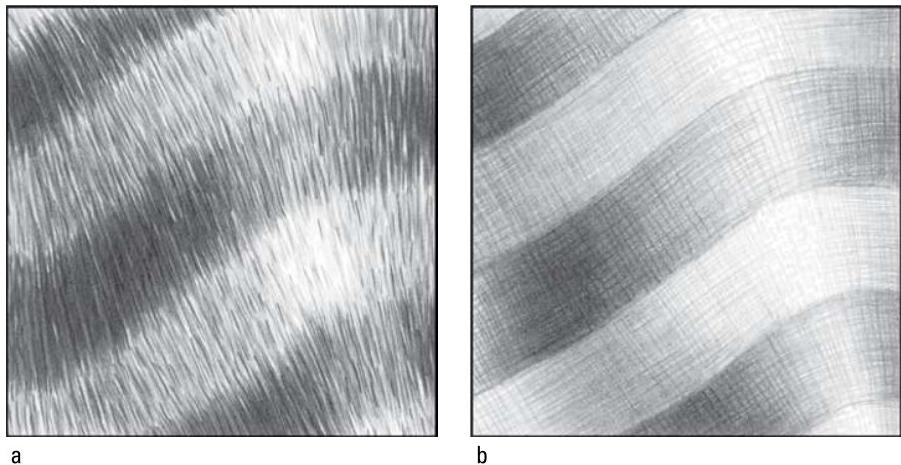
If you're drawing a striped, silky fabric like the one shown in Figure 9-1b, consider that the pattern is striped but the texture is smooth. To create the striped pattern, you need to use the same value gradations you use to draw the fur in Figure 9-1a, but this time, you need to use shading to create a smooth texture.



TIP

There are a variety of shading techniques you could use to create a smooth texture. The important thing is to think about how the marks you make activate the surface of the drawing. Hatching created a fuzzy texture for Figure 9-1a. Can you think of a way you could use hatching to create a smooth texture? The way you draw impacts the way it looks and the way it feels to look at it. If you want your drawing to look soft, try making your marks softly. If you want your drawing to feel tangled, try to conjure the sensation of something tangled while you draw.

To create the smooth texture in Figure 9-1b, the artist used the crosshatching technique to define the finely woven texture of the fabric. (Crosshatching is the same thing as hatching except that you make two sets of lines, one that crosses over the other. See Chapter 8 for more details on crosshatching and other shading techniques.)



**FIGURE 9-1:**  
Examining an identical pattern of stripes on two different textures.

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## Identifying Textures

Nature presents many diverse textures, from the smooth, placid surface of a serene pond to the jagged edges of a rocky cliff. Re-creating textures in drawing is helpful if you want to draw something realistically. For example, by re-creating the texture of fur in your drawings, your drawing tells the eye what the animal feels like as well as what it looks like.

The world is full of different textures for you to draw, but the majority of these textures fall into one of the following categories:

» **Smooth:** When you run your hand over a *smooth* surface, you feel no unevenness or roughness; in fact, you don't feel many surface features at all. Smooth textures can have surfaces that are dull and matte (like a smooth stone), wet and glistening (like the surface of a still pond), or shiny and soft (like the body of a seal).

- » **Rough:** The surface features on a *rough* surface are visible, and when you touch them, their textures feel uneven, irregular, or jagged. Think about the rough textures of a piece of tree bark, a piece of coarse sandpaper, or the surface of a cheese grater.
- » **Matte:** Matte surfaces are not shiny. They often have additional textural characteristics, such as smooth or rough. Many fabrics, smooth rocks and stones, and unfinished wood have matte textures.
- » **Shiny:** *Shiny* surfaces appear glossy or highly polished; they're defined by reflectivity. (Chapter 10 has find more tips for drawing transparent, shiny surfaces like glass.) Think about the surface of polished stone, brass, porcelain, or new pennies.
- » **Furry, fuzzy, hairy, and fluffy:** *Furry*, *fuzzy*, or *hairy* surfaces can be soft or coarse, long or short, thick or thin, and curly or straight. Things that are furry, fuzzy, or hairy can also appear to be fluffy. Fluffy things are in a special category. Fluffiness, like pillows, clouds, and whipped cream is a texture characterized by soft, dynamic contours, and buoyancy.
- » **Grassy:** *Grassy* textures are similar to hairy or furry ones. They can be long or short, wavy or straight, dense or sparse, fine or coarse. Grassy textures may appear to be soft or scratchy. The straw that lines a horse's stall, your backyard, and a field of flowers all have grassy textures.



REMEMBER

Don't feel overwhelmed by identifying and drawing textures. Consider each of your drawing subjects to be an opportunity to solve a fun problem. The truth is if you can see and draw shapes of value, you can also draw texture (see Chapter 8 for more on drawing value). Expect to experiment with several different techniques before you get your textures to look exactly right. With a little time and patience, you'll discover your favorite shading techniques to use for rendering any texture you see or imagine.

The following sections provide more details as well as illustrations about each of the textures I describe here. In your sketchbook, try to use shading to copy the textures in some or all of the illustrations you see. Grab a few sharp pencils and some good erasers and get ready to start adding texture to your drawings. (See Chapter 8 for detailed information about shading.)



TIP

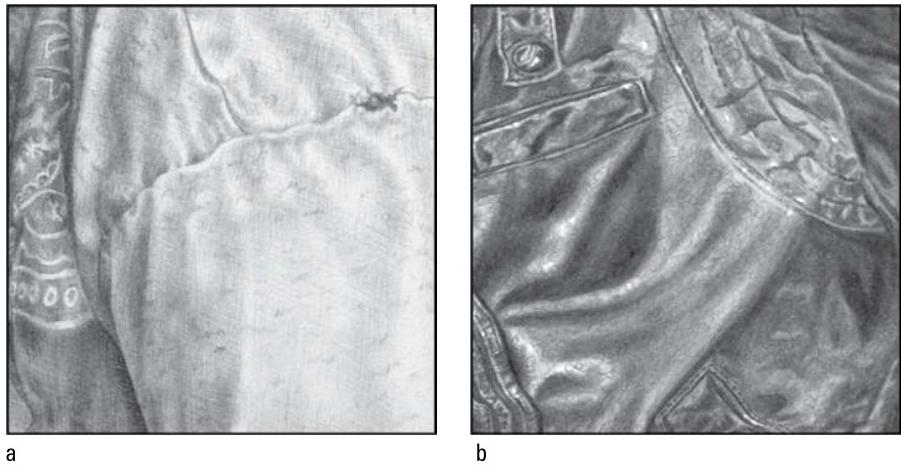
If you're worried about getting the drawings just right, feel free to use tracing paper to trace the major lines in the illustrations shown here. Don't worry — tracing the lines isn't cheating when your goal is to practice rendering textures.

## Smooth, matte, shiny, and glistening textures

Explore the contrasting textures of the garments in the two drawings in Figure 9-2. The matte texture of the delicate fabric in Figure 9-2a contrasts with the shiny texture in Figure 9-2b. To make the effect in Figure 9-2a, the artist carefully controlled the value contrast using mostly light and medium values. Quite a bit of the white paper is preserved here to show light. The fabric looks soft because the artist used light, gently curving lines to define the edges in the drawing. The fabric looks matte because the value contrast is low.

In contrast, the shiny leather texture of the jacket in Figure 9-2b is rendered with firm edges and extremes in values. It looks shiny because the pronounced highlights contrast with the darker values of the jacket, telling your eye this surface is reflective.

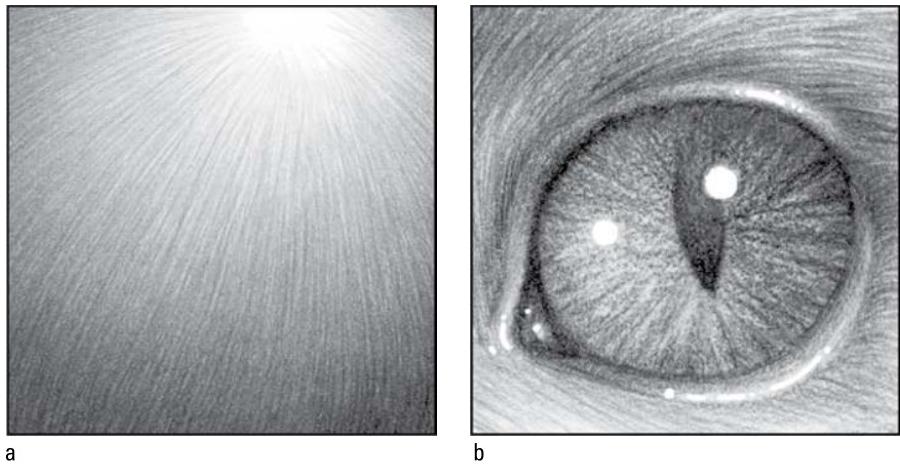
**FIGURE 9-2:**  
Comparing soft,  
matte fabric with  
shiny leather.



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For another example, compare the textures of the two sections of spheres (yes, an eyeball is a sphere) in Figure 9-3. The surface of the sphere in Figure 9-3a seems dry because its texture is matte, while the cat's eye in Figure 9-3b appears to be wet because of its glistening texture. In Figure 9-3a, the transition between values is gradual and the contrast is lower. In Figure 9-3b, the transition between values is higher and it happens abruptly. The strong contrast between the dark shadows and the distinct highlights on the eye suggests a glistening, wet surface.

**FIGURE 9-3:**  
Comparing the  
matte surface of  
a sphere to the  
glistening surface  
of a cat's eye.



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## Fuzzy and fluffy textures

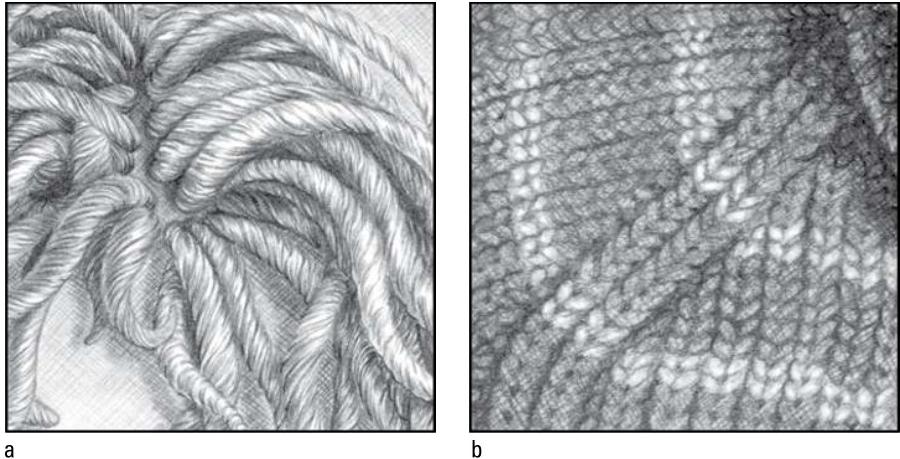
You can walk into any department store and see the infinite range of fabrics people use for dressing their homes and themselves. Fabrics are lots of fun to draw because of their diverse textures and patterns.

In Figure 9-4a, you can see the soft, fluffy texture of the fibers that make up each individual strand of yarn. Curved hatching lines create the illusion that each strand is rounded. Take note of darkest values you see. The darkest lines and shapes function as shadows, separating the strands of yarn. Without these shadows, the yarn would be a formless mess.

Figure 9-4b shows how the soft, fluffy yarn changes to a fuzzy, bumpy texture when it's knit into a sweater. Notice how important the shapes of dark value in the center of each little knot are. These dark values show your eye that there are holes between strands of yarn. The braids in the sweater are an illusion created by the interplay between the strands of yarn and the spaces inside and around them. Although you don't have to know how to knit to render this fuzzy texture, you do need a sharp pencil and lots of patience.

## Furry and hairy textures

Here's a helpful tip to keep in mind as you practice drawing textures: Sometimes when you can't figure out how to draw what's in front of you, you have to draw what isn't there; in other words, you have to draw the spaces in between what's in front of you.



**FIGURE 9-4:**  
Examining the  
fluffy and fuzzy  
textures of  
strands of yarn  
and a sweater.

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To see what I mean, compare the furs of the long-haired dog shown in Figure 9-5a to the short-haired cat shown in Figure 9-5b. Notice that, in both drawings, the soft and downy part you think of as the fur appears to have light shining on it. In drawings like these, the only parts you can draw are the shadows! While you're drawing, you have to think hard about the way you move your pencil. The kind of marks you make establish whether the shadows are wavy or straight, short or long.

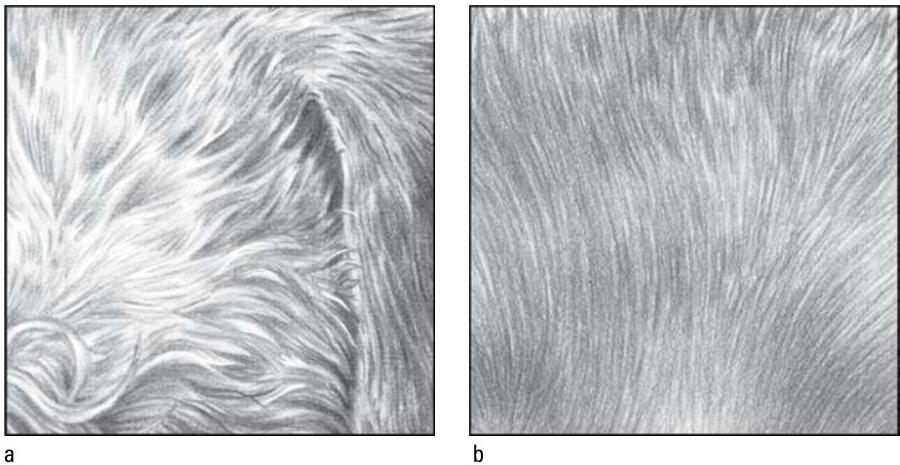
Take a closer look at Figure 9-5a. You can tell the dog's ear overlaps part of its head because of the dark values under the ear. Where the ear overlaps the head, you see a *cast shadow* (the shadow one object makes on another because it blocks the light). The value of the cast shadow is distinctly darker than any other value in the drawing. Notice the cast shadow isn't a solid shape! Some of the light strands of fur overlap the cast shadow. If you were making a drawing like this, you could use an eraser to "draw" the light strands on top of the shadow. (See Chapter 8 for more details about cast shadows and drawing with your eraser.)

## Rough and grassy textures

From the rough bark on tree trunks to diverse rugged ground surfaces and rocks, rendering accurate textures is integral to creating realistic landscape drawings.

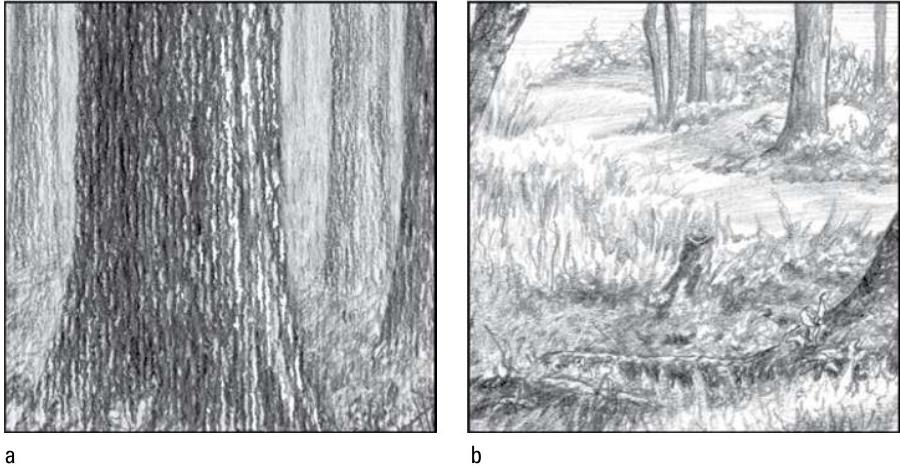
Figure 9-6 is a perfect example of how using different shading techniques can help you create different textures. In Figure 9-6a, notice how hatching lines of different widths, lengths, and values give the trunk of the tree a rough texture. Compare that rough texture to the soft grassy textures of the ground foliage in Figure 9-6b.

**FIGURE 9-5:**  
Comparing the  
fur texture of a  
long-haired dog  
to that of a  
short-haired cat.



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**FIGURE 9-6:**  
Examining the  
shading of some  
rough and grassy  
textures.



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## Translating Textures into Drawings

After you identify your subject's texture, look closely at your subject, and use your judgment to decide which shading techniques you want to use. (See Chapter 8 for information about shading techniques.)

# Planning your textured drawing

The planning aspect of drawing, such as choosing what shading technique to use, allows you to get the basic parts out of the way so you have the freedom to focus on refining your drawing.



TIP

Use the following tips to help you prepare to add texture to your drawing:

- » Look for lines in your subject's texture. If the subject has a hairy or furry texture, look for the lines that make up the hair or fur; the length of these lines and whether they're straight, wavy, or curly dictate the type of marks you need to make to render the hairy or furry texture. If the subject is a woven fabric, look for the grid-like lines that make up the weave of the fabric.

For example, the fur in the two drawings in Figure 9-5, earlier in this chapter, is well suited to curving hatching lines. But you can also capture the furry textures using other shading techniques. (See Chapter 8 for more info on shading.)

- » **Look for the shapes created by the light and dark values in your subject.** The rough texture of the tree trunk in Figure 9-7a is a perfect example of the way light and dark shapes work together to create texture. (Turn to Chapter 8 for details on light and shadows.)

The most important part of drawing textures is getting the light parts and shadow parts right (the right place, the right shape, and the right values). (For more on values, see Chapter 8.)



REMEMBER

## Creating texture on paper



SKETCHBOOK

To get a “feel” for shading textures, find a simple object, such as a leaf or a rock, with an interesting texture. (*Note:* To get the most benefit from your practice, draw from an actual object rather than a photograph or another drawing.) Examine the object closely. Put it in your hand so you can feel its texture and see it at the same time. Try closing your eyes for a moment. If you close your eyes, your sense of touch can help you notice more about how a texture feels. Then try to visually translate what you feel and see. (Refer to the preceding section for guidance.) Begin your drawing by following these steps:

1. **Draw the basic shape of the object.**
2. **Lightly block in the basic light and dark values.**

See Chapter 8 for details on how to block in your values.

### **3. Shade the dark areas of the object with medium to dark values.**

Take note of how light and shadow define the form of your object.

## **Combining three-dimensional form with patterns and textures**

Thinking about texture and pattern can be overwhelming to the beginner, especially if you feel like you're still struggling to get your objects to look three-dimensional and your values to look realistic. But you don't have to wait until you master these skills before you try to draw texture and pattern.

Use your sketchbook to play with samples of texture and pattern. Who says you have to make a whole drawing every time? Grab an object with a fun pattern and texture and devote a 2-inch square (or more) in your sketchbook to drawing just that object's texture. Then, in another 2-inch square, practice drawing the object's pattern. After a little practice, you'll be ready to put everything together — three-dimensional form, value, pattern, and texture, that is — and it'll become much easier to do with practice.



To get a little practice with combining forms, patterns, and textures in your drawings, try this quick exercise. Find an object with a simple pattern (a striped or checkered dishcloth makes for a good subject here) and place it in front of you. Use any pencils you want and follow these steps:

- 1. Draw the shape of the object.**
- 2. Map out the outlines of the object's pattern.**
- 3. Choose a shading technique you feel best defines works with the object's texture.**
- 4. Use line to lightly draw the pattern structure.**
- 5. Use line to lightly map out the value structure, drawing the shapes of shadows, including any core shadow and cast shadows.**
- 6. Shade, focusing on the values of the pattern.**
- 7. Shade a second time, focusing on the values of the shadows, core shadow, and cast shadow(s).**
- 8. Make any necessary adjustments.**

As you add shading, pay close attention to the different values that make up the pattern. Observe how some areas of the pattern are automatically darker than others. Take note of how the pattern is affected by the form of the three-dimensional of the object.

# Project: Creating Two Fun Textures

This project has two parts. The first part challenges you to discover and draw a useful and versatile texture using an intuitive approach to mark-making. The second part takes you step by step through making a drawing of spotted fur.

## Sketching with textural mark-making

Texture in your drawings doesn't always have to be there to represent something realistically. Texture in your drawing can come from the way you make marks. *Mark-making* is what happens anytime you draw. It is so basic to drawing that the only time people notice it is when the mark-making is distinctive for some reason.

Take a quick trip to the Internet to search for a drawing called "Madame Seurat, the Artist's Mother" by Georges Seurat. This drawing is typical of drawings by Seurat. He developed a technique he called *irradiation*. He focused on shapes and values instead of lines. He used black conté crayons on a texture paper. The result of the way he used his crayons is an atmospheric hum that radiates throughout the drawing. This drawing, like Seurat's other drawings, has a texture that comes from the way he used materials. His subjects are recognizably realistic and yet, the textures are not about realistic depictions of fabric, skin, hair, and so on.

It can be exhilarating to create a drawing where mark-making takes on a central role. This chapter has talked a lot about how you can be intentional with the kind of shading technique you use to make a realistic depiction of your subject. You'll find a number of techniques for shading in this book (particularly in Chapter 8). Shading techniques are essentially mark-making techniques. It's okay to go off the rails and invent your own mark-making (shading) techniques. Make any kind of mark you can imagine. Layer the marks over each other, increasing density when you want to darken the value. The example in this section uses a bunch of squiggly, curved lines that cross over in many different directions to create value and texture (a process often called *scribbling*). The more lines you draw, the darker the value becomes.



REMEMBER

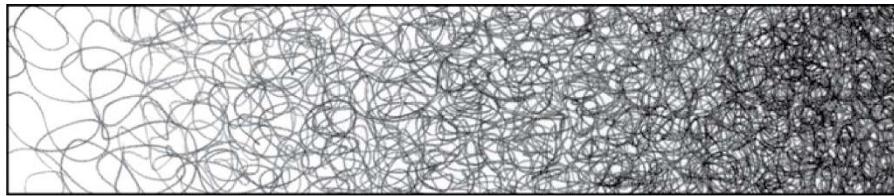
As with any shading technique, you can illustrate changes in form, light, and shadows in a drawing simply by incorporating value graduations into your mark-making (see Chapter 8 for a refresher on drawing graduations).



SKETCHBOOK

To practice creating texture with mark-making, grab your sketchbook and follow these steps to create the texture you see in Figure 9-7. The artist of this drawing used a 2B pencil for the first two steps and then switched to a 6B pencil for the third step, but you can use whichever pencils you prefer. See Figure 9-7 for a look at the final product.

1. **Lightly draw curvilinear marks like the ones on the left side of Figure 9-7 across your entire drawing space.**
2. **Beginning about one-third of the way from the left, add another layer of curvilinear marks all the way to the far right; increase the density of your marks as you move across your drawing space.**
3. **Beginning about two-thirds from the left, draw another layer of curvilinear marks all the way to the far right; increase the density of your marks as you go until the end of your drawing space is really dark.**



**FIGURE 9-7:**  
Practice using  
mark-making to  
create texture.

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## Drawing furry spots

To draw spotted fur, you need to create pattern and texture simultaneously. Fortunately, you can do so somewhat easily. Choose an appropriate shading technique for the type of fur you’re drawing and focus on getting the shape and quality of the values right. For this project, you create a close-up drawing of some spotted fur to practice rendering both pattern and texture.

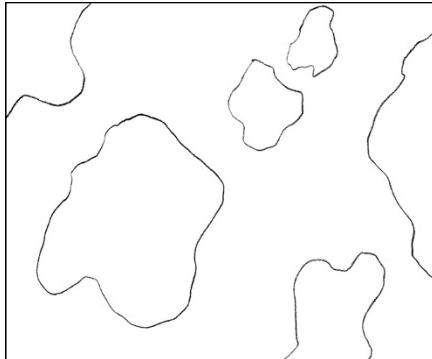


SKETCHBOOK

When you’re ready to get started, grab your sketchbook, your kneaded eraser, and some pencils (HB, 2H, 2B, 4B, and 6B). Then follow these steps:

1. **Use your HB pencil to draw a 2-x-3-inch rectangle.**
2. **Use your HB pencil to map out some spots very lightly in your drawing space (see Figure 9-8).**

Make the spots all different shapes and sizes. (Don’t worry about drawing your spots exactly like the ones in the figure.) Try making a couple of partial spots that seem to disappear off the edges of your drawing space.



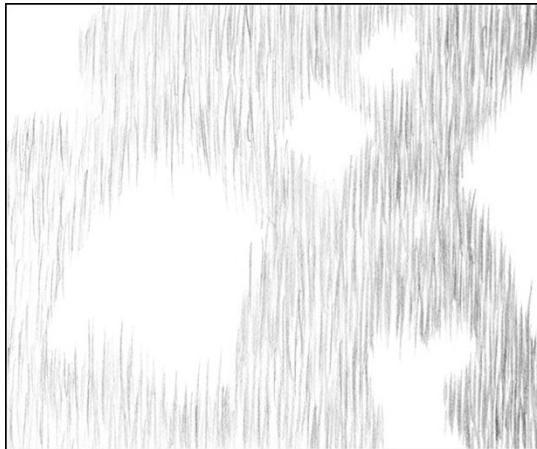
**FIGURE 9-8:**  
Drawing the simple shapes that make up the fur's pattern.

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- 3. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten your mapping lines until you can barely see them.**
- 4. With your 2H pencil, draw a bunch of hatching lines of different lengths in all the areas without spots (see Figure 9-9).**

Turn to Chapter 8 for everything you need to know about drawing hatching lines and other shading techniques.

Although this drawing is based on your imagination, I recommend that you define a light source. Pretend the light is coming from the left. Make your lines light on the left and then gradually darker as you move to the right (refer to Figure 9-9 to see what I mean). See Chapter 8 for more details on light sources.



**FIGURE 9-9:**  
Drawing hatching lines to represent the first layer of texture and value.

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**5. Use your 2B pencil to draw a bunch of hatching lines of different lengths in all the spots (see Figure 9-10).**

Gradually increase the density of the marks to darken the value of the spots. Switch to your 4B pencil if you need to draw darker values than the 2B will allow and then to your 6B for the very darkest values.

Notice that the marks that make the texture of the spots in Figure 9-10 interweave with the marks that make the texture of the spaces between the spots. Textures like this one look most realistic if you allow them to mingle at the edges.



REMEMBER

If your imaginary light source is coming from the left, gradually make your dark shading darker as you move to the right (see Figure 9-10).



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**FIGURE 9-10:**  
Using hatching  
lines to draw the  
different spot  
lengths and  
values.



# **3 Experimenting with Subject Matter**

### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Setting the stage for meaningful still life drawings with tips for selecting objects and arranging and lighting your still life, plus a look at the special challenges of transparent objects.

Representing nature in your drawings, including managing clouds and sky, adjusting your drawing approach for foliage and flowers when the subjects are distant versus close-up, and a way to represent snow-covered nature.

Capturing the textures of furry and feathered animals in a way that reveals underlying anatomy and tips for making lively animal portraits.

Studying the human form from superficial anatomy to tips for simplifying the body into its gestures and using that to construct a figure drawing.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Choosing subjects to include in your still life drawings
- » Arranging and lighting your still life drawings
- » Creating your own still life drawing

## Chapter **10**

# Making Meaningful Still Life Drawings

The still life is one of the most popular subjects in the history of art. It could be because still life drawings offer so many clear advantages. One of the most important of these is time. Unlike human models, who eventually have to leave your studio to eat, sleep, and so on, the still life works on your schedule. You can work on it for a while, take a break, and come back to it whenever you're ready. And unlike when you work with landscapes, you don't have to worry about changing weather conditions and the like when you work with still life.

The words “still life” conjure visions of a bowl filled with fruit or a vase filled with flowers. The truth is, though, anything that sits still can make a good subject for a still life. That means you can choose objects that are meaningful to you.

Working from the still life offers you the freedom to work when and for as long as you want. It is a great way to practice your drawing. In this chapter, I show you everything you need to know to get started drawing from the still life. You'll find out how to set them up, how to light them effectively, and, finally, how to draw them accurately.

# Selecting Subjects for Still Life Drawings

The objects you choose for your still life will impact the way your drawing looks and what it means. Here are some ideas to consider. You might choose objects that seem to belong together because of some functional relationship, like the ingredients and tools for making breakfast. Or you may choose objects that seem to belong together because of some visual similarity, like a group of round things or plaid things.



REMEMBER

Regardless of how you choose your objects, try to pick items that are meaningful to you. If you're excited about what you're drawing, it's a lot easier to get started.

It is generally easier to create a composition that is balanced and interesting if you choose an odd number of objects. The number of objects you choose is up to you. You can make a beautiful still life drawing of a single stalk of asparagus. It would be an interesting challenge to draw a table loaded with bags of groceries. The following sections show you how to select just the right objects for your still life, how to group your objects based on function and visual elements, and how to incorporate transparent objects for maximum impact.



WARNING

Although grouping a large number of objects in one still life can make for a very visually stimulating drawing, you need a lot of patience to complete such a drawing. But don't let that dissuade you. If you love a challenge, go for it!

## Choosing still life subjects that are meaningful to you

Objects don't have to be family heirlooms to be meaningful, and you don't have to go out of your way to find them. Any object that interests you can make a good still life subject.

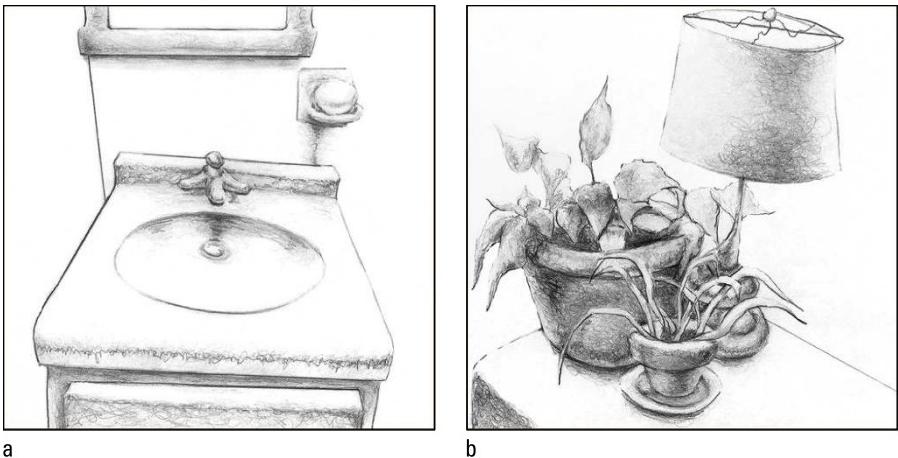
Look around you at the things you use every day. You can create a still life drawing that documents a time in your life or a personal interest by choosing objects that are part of your story. For example, the artist of Figure 10-1 chose to draw the sink in Figure 10-1a because its quirky angle was something she saw every day. She chose to draw the plants and lamp in Figure 10-1b because she liked how the lamp seemed to be growing up from its round base just like the plants are growing out of their round pots.



REMEMBER

Drawing objects is a powerful way of getting to know them. Get ready to see your familiar things in a whole new way.

**FIGURE 10-1:**  
Your home is  
your personal  
prop closet,  
brimming with  
still life subjects.



— Jamie Combs



TIP

Make choosing your still life objects fun. You're not obligated to stick to the tried and true. When you're choosing still life objects, ask yourself what would make you so excited to draw it that you can hardly wait to see the looks on your friends' faces when they see what you've been up to.

## Grouping still life objects

When it comes to gathering objects for a still life, you basically have two options. You can group objects based either on their visual elements (color, shape, size, or surface texture) or on their uses/meanings (what they do or represent). Regardless of how you choose your objects for a still life, keep in mind that your objects must work well together to create a sense of *unity* (wholeness) in your compositions.

*Formal similarity* is one way to create unity. Formal similarity is when *visual elements* (the lines, shapes, spaces, values, patterns, textures, and so on) combine to create the illusion of real things.

Objects that are formally similar might not have much in common besides what they look like. For example, a composition built from round objects might include a bowling ball, an orange, and some gumballs. With formal similarity, the possibilities are endless!



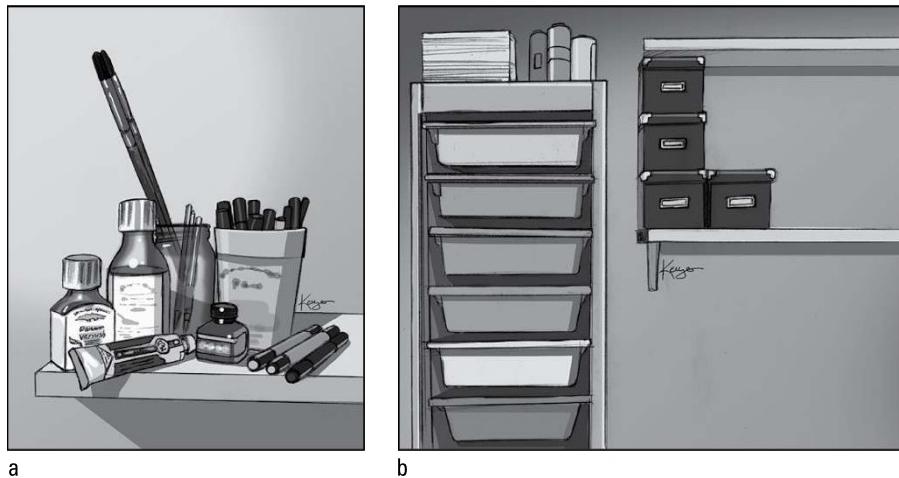
REMEMBER

Variety is the spice of life. It can spice up your drawings, too. Similarity is a great way to tie a composition together, but too much similarity can make your drawings bland. Try introducing variety with elements like scale, texture, value, and color (if you're using it). Take a look at the list of round objects suggested in the last paragraph. This assortment might be a little strange but one thing it has going for it, besides formal similarity, is that it's a good example of variation in scale.

Variety is helpful to think about when you're setting up a still life based on functional relationships, too. In Figure 10-2a, the tall paint brush leaning out of the cup is a similar shape to the pens but the scale shift (giant brush/normal pens) is a surprise that keeps the eye interested. What are some other elements in Figure 10-2a that add variety to the drawing? (Hint: Take a look at the orientation of each object.)

In Figure 10-2, you can see examples of the difference between groupings based on formal similarity and groupings based on functional relationships. The two drawings are similar in appearance, but the ideas behind them are very different. Figure 10-2a is a drawing of objects that belong together because of a functional relationship. (All these objects are used for making art.) Figure 10-2b is a drawing of objects that seem to belong together because of a formal similarity. (All these objects are rectangular.)

**FIGURE 10-2:**  
Grouping objects  
based on  
functional  
relationships (a)  
and formal  
similarity (b).



*Kensuke Okabayashi*



REMEMBER

Another way you can group objects by their function is to think about the story they tell together. You can create a theme based on physical objects, such as gardening tools and plants, or a theme based on an idea, such as history, identity, fictional characters, and so on. For example, if you want to create a still life grouping based on a story, choose objects that symbolize the story. For example, you might make an arrangement of things you'd expect to find on Sherlock Holmes' coffee table.

## Enjoying the challenge of transparent objects

Transparent objects have long been favorite subjects for still life artists, perhaps because transparency is such a playful illusion. Transparency allows you to see an object and see through it at the same time. Transparent objects sometimes have shiny surfaces, too. That means you'll need strong highlights and a full range of values to pull off the illusion. Check out the drawings in Figure 10-3 to see what I mean. (See Chapter 9 for more on drawing textures.)

In Figure 10-3a, the artist had to pay careful attention to value to render the object's transparent qualities:

- » The darker values from the top section of the background appear in the upper half of the bottle.
- » Lighter values from the surface on which the bottle is sitting are visible in the lower section.
- » The dark values of the shadow under the bottle are visible in the base of the bottle.
- » The edges of the bottle practically disappear in a few places. It's helpful to pay attention to edge quality when you are making a drawing of a three-dimensional drawing subject. Notice which edges are hard and which are soft. Some edges are so soft, like parts of the bottle, that they seem to disappear. When that happens, you can make your drawing look more realistic by allowing those disappearing edges to be barely visible. Edge quality is a function of contrast. (See Chapter 8 for more information on contrast.) Hard edges indicate a strong contrast between the object and its background. Soft edges indicate a lower level of contrast. Disappearing edges indicate virtually no contrast.

The crystal angel in Figure 10-3b is a drawing of a highly detailed transparent object. The artist left the background white to make it easy to focus on the complicated structure of this subject.

**FIGURE 10-3:**  
Using value and  
texture to draw  
transparent still  
life objects.



a



b

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## IDENTIFYING THE SHAPE OF A CAST SHADOW

A *cast shadow* is a shadow that occurs when one object blocks light from hitting another object. For example, when you stand on the sidewalk at dawn or dusk, you have a shadow because your body is blocking the light of the sun from hitting the sidewalk.

The shape of a cast shadow is the sum of the light source plus the shape of an object. For example, if an apple sits in the afternoon light when the sun is high in the sky, its shadow is similar in shape to the apple itself. If the sun is low in the sky, like it is at dawn or dusk, the shadow of the apple appears elongated.

To test the impact of changing light sources on objects, set up an experiment. Find several differently shaped objects, place them one at a time near a strong light, and observe their shadows. Move the light around (or move the objects around) and watch how the shadows change shape. (Refer to Chapter 8 for more information on shadows.)

# Arranging Your Still Life

When you're ready to set up your still life, imagine that you're the director of your drawing and you have to arrange your "actors" on a stage. The arrangement sets up the basic rhythms and tells the viewer about the objects. If possible, try to arrange your objects in a way that accentuates the qualities that attracted you to them. For example, surrounding a tall vase with short vases makes the tall vase look even taller. (For more detailed information on composition, see Chapter 5.)



TIP

Setting up even the simplest still life may seem daunting if you've never set one up before. But don't panic! The following tips are here to help you:

- » **Choose a variety of objects that complement each other.** Whether you decide on a functional grouping or a formal grouping, select objects that look good together. It's a good idea to use objects of various heights, but make sure they're all substantial enough that none of them get lost.
- » **Keep it simple.** Three objects is a good number to start with. If each object is a slightly different height than the others, you can arrange them almost any way and they'll look good.
- » **Decide where to set up your still life.** If you don't have a private studio, choose a spot where you can leave your still life set up until you're finished drawing it.
- » **Set up some kind of background behind your still life.** Don't make the background an afterthought. After all, the background will be part of your finished drawing. You can set your still life up against a wall or a window, or you can hang a cloth or tape some paper to a board behind the still life to add a clean and simple background.
- » **Decide what to use for a base.** If the surface of the table you're using for your still life isn't something you want to draw, cover it with something else. Plain or patterned fabric can be a beautiful accent to a still life; however, the folds of fabric are challenging to draw. If you're new to drawing, I recommend skipping fabric in favor of white or colored paper as a base.
- » **Experiment with arrangement.** Try a number of arrangements before settling on one. Here are just a few examples:
  - Spread out your objects.
  - Huddle your objects close together.
  - Group two objects together in opposition to one that is set apart. Experiment with which ones you group together and how far away the isolated one is.

- Line up your objects in height order.
- Line up your objects with the tallest in the center.

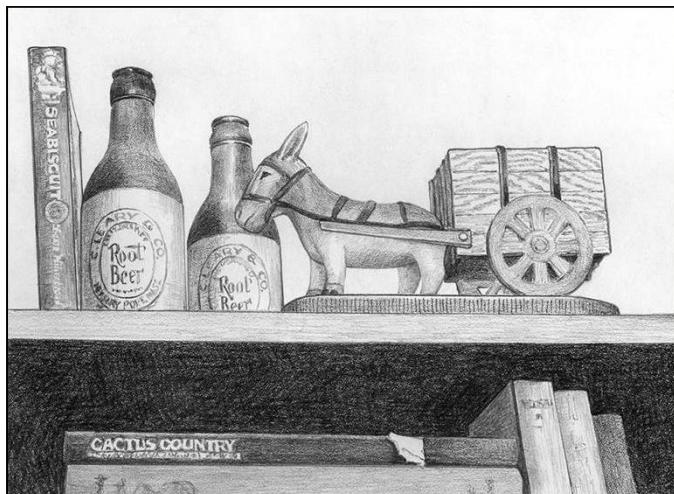
» **Consider whether to use vertical, horizontal, square, or round drawing paper.**

**paper.** Most still life drawings are either horizontal or vertical, but how do you choose which one's for you? Take your cue from the general orientation of your subject matter. If your still life is spread out horizontally, a horizontal format is a good choice. If your still life is narrow and tall, a vertical format is the best choice.

» **Make sure you have a comfortable place to sit or stand when you draw.**

After you start your drawing, you can't change your position from sitting to standing without drastically altering the way you see the objects of your still life. And when you alter the way you see the objects, you can't possibly draw them from the same perspective. (See Chapter 7 for a lot more info on perspective.)

After you've been drawing for a while, you may want to try some more challenging still life setups. One great way to ramp up your setup is to sit yourself at an unconventional perspective from your objects to create an atypical view. Try this: Sit on the floor and look up at the top of a bookshelf; draw your books and mementos from below. Check out Figure 10-4 for an example of how this setup might look.



**FIGURE 10-4:**  
Drawing common  
objects from  
uncommon  
perspectives.

*Barbara Frake*

# Lighting Your Still Life

If you've ever been in a dark room and watched your friends hold flashlights underneath their chins, you know that lighting has quite an impact! (If you haven't ever done this sort of experiment, grab a friend and try it!)

Lighting sets the scene and the mood for your drawing, letting your viewers know whether it's day, night, calm, intense, or anything in between. As the director of your drawing, you're responsible for choosing the right lighting for the mood you want your drawing to have. If you aren't sure what you're looking for, experiment. Try looking at your objects in several different lighting situations to see which one works best.

The first thing you need to decide is whether you want to use natural or artificial light. If you want to use artificial light, you can purchase inexpensive clamp lights and high-watt bulbs at any hardware store. These room brighteners make great light sources for still life drawings.



WARNING

If you want to use natural light, be aware that the light will change from time to time as the sun ducks behind and out of the clouds and as daylight turns to night. Don't let this tidbit dissuade you from using natural light, though, because it produces beautiful shadows and can be useful in adding mood to your drawing.



TIP

To deal with the problem of constantly changing natural light, do one of the following:

- » **Keep several pieces of paper handy so that you can start a new version of your drawing each time the light changes.** You can get the partially finished drawings out again the next day and work on each of them as the light becomes right. Making several drawings at once may actually be an exciting experience. The downside is that if it rains on the day you start drawing, you have to wait until it rains again to work on that series of drawings.
- » **Go along with the changes.** You don't have to constantly redo the light and shadows in your drawing to go along with changes in light.
- » **Take a photograph before you get started and use it as a reference as you complete the drawing.** You'll lose some of the complexity of the lights and shadows because photography condenses values, but at least you'll have a record of where the value shapes were when you started drawing.

After you choose which type of light to use, you need to decide how to adjust the position of the light or how to place your still life to get the light effect you want. Figure 10-5 shows you how changing the lighting position affects the way a still life vase appears to the viewer.

To get a better idea of how light affects still life subjects, find an object, a flat surface, and a portable light source. (You can use any light source you want, such as a clamp light, a lamp, a flashlight, or even the glow from your computer.) Place your object on the flat surface, set up each of the following four lighting options, and see which ones you like:

» **Light from above and slightly to the right of the object (see Figure 10-5a):**

This traditional lighting option emphasizes the vase's shadows, highlights, and three-dimensional forms.

» **Light from the right and slightly below the object (see Figure 10-5b):**

This lighting option creates lots of contrast between highlights and shadows and also illustrates the vase's three-dimensional qualities. Look for *reflected light* on the shadow side of your object. Reflected light bounces into a shadow from someplace nearby (often from the surface the object sits on). (Check out Chapter 7 for more about light, shadows, and reflected light.)

» **Light from directly behind the object (see Figure 10-5c):**

Backlighting provides a less detailed image because you see only the shadow side of the vase. When drawing this type of still life, you need to shade most of the object with dark values.

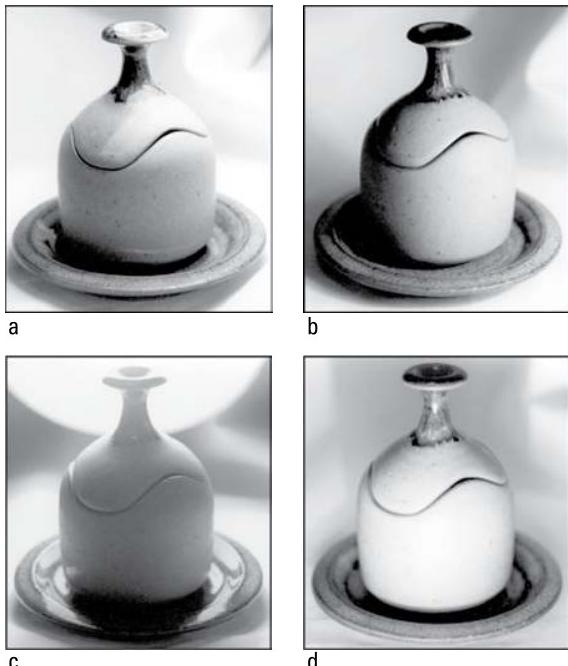
» **Light from directly in front of the object (see Figure 10-5d):**

The lack of visible shadows, which are out of your line of view (behind the object), makes an object lit from the front appear soft and flat. Frontal lighting is very common in photos for which you use a flash.



REMEMBER

Photos can be great reference tools. However, photos do have limitations. For example, the photograph in Figure 10-5b didn't capture the slight rim of reflected light that appeared clearly on the shadow side of the actual vase. Try to draw from actual objects whenever possible.



**FIGURE 10-5:**  
Lighting the same  
object four  
different ways.

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## Project: Drawing a Still Life

The key to drawing anything is to break it down into the simplest, most general shapes you can and then work gradually toward greater levels of specificity. Before you start drawing a still life object, spend some time just looking at it. Try to forget that you know what it is; examine the object as though you've never seen it before. Look at the basic shapes (cylinders, spheres, boxes, and cones) that make it up. When you're able to see the simple shapes that make up an object, you're well on your way to making an accurate drawing.



For this project, choose any drawing media you like. The artist of the figures shown here used a 2B graphite pencil to begin and then switched to a 4B graphite pencil later in the drawing. You also need some paper and an eraser. To get started, choose an object you want to draw and follow these steps:

1. Place your object on a flat surface so that you can easily see the whole thing.

Figure 10-6 shows the coffee mug being used for this still life drawing.

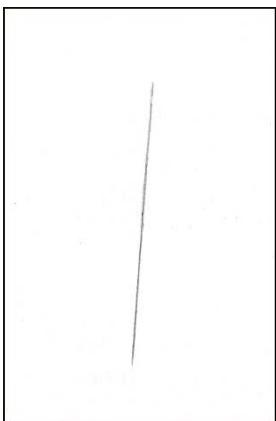


**FIGURE 10-6:**  
The still life  
subject set up on  
a flat surface.

*Jamie Combs*

- 2. Look at the object, hold your 2B pencil near the top of the paper, and imagine a line running through the center of the object. Keep your eyes on the object and, without looking at the paper, move your pencil to trace the imaginary line from top to bottom.**

This line is your object's *axis* (the line that runs through the center of an object). See Figure 10-7 for the coffee mug's imagined axis.



**FIGURE 10-7:**  
Drawing the  
coffee mug's  
imagined axis on  
the paper.

*Jamie Combs*

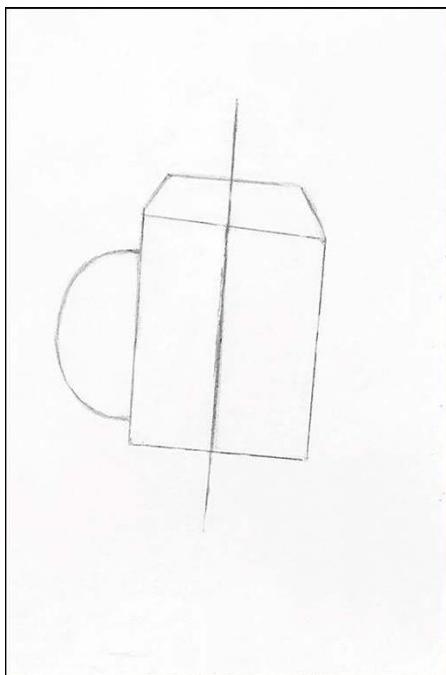
3. Look at the object again to determine what shapes you see; lightly and quickly draw the simple shapes of your object using the line you drew in Step 2 as a center line to build the shapes around.

The coffee cup from Figure 10-6 breaks down into a box with half of a sphere sticking out of its side (see Figure 10-8).



WARNING

You probably won't get the shapes exactly right in a single line. But don't take time to erase every mistake; if you do, you'll lose momentum. Plus, if you erase a mistake, you may forget where it was and redraw the same mistake. Don't be too fussy with your drawings in the beginning. You can erase all the extra lines later.



**FIGURE 10-8:**  
Breaking the  
object down into  
basic shapes.

*Jamie Combs*

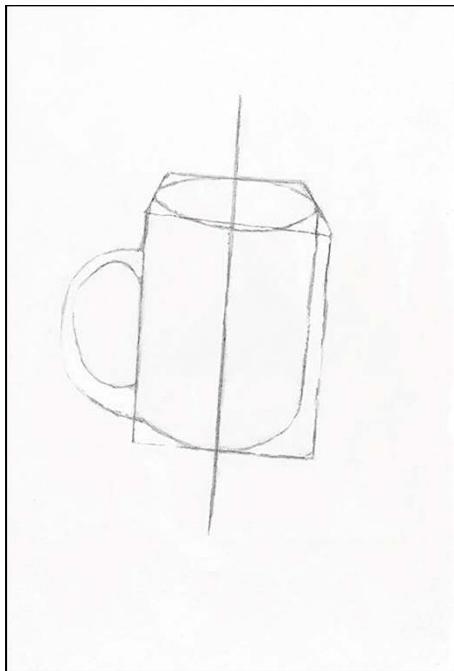
4. Use the lines you drew in Step 3 as a framework to help you as you connect and smooth out the contours of your object (see Figure 10-9).



TIP

The top of the cup is especially tricky to draw. Your brain knows the top of the cup is a circle, but, if you try to draw it as a circle, the coffee cup won't look realistic. When a circle turns away from you like it does when a cup sits on a table in front of you, the circle is foreshortened into an oval-like shape (refer to Figure 10-9 for an example). To draw a foreshortened circle well, draw without

looking at your paper. Keep your eyes trained on your subject and move your hand, imagining that you're actually drawing on your subject. Try to forget about the paper and just feel your pencil around the edge of the foreshortened circle.



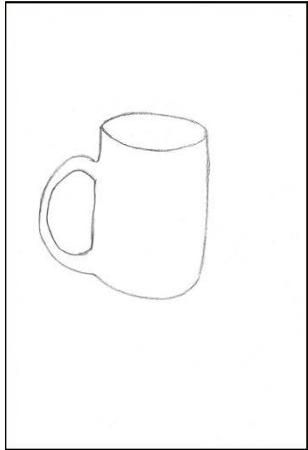
**FIGURE 10-9:**  
Using the basic  
shape lines as a  
framework while  
you smooth out  
the contours of  
your object.

*Jamie Combs*

**5. Look carefully at the curves and angles of your object and adjust any of the lines in your drawing that don't quite match up.**

It's a good idea to keep all your lines light in the early stages of a drawing. As you start to refine the drawing, figure out where your lines need extra emphasis. Look carefully at the edges of your subject. Pick out the darkest parts and the lightest parts. Where the edges look darker, use your 2B pencil to retrace the lines. Take care to retrace delicately, making gentle transitions. (For more information about this process, see the section on line weight variation in Chapter 7.)

**6. Erase any lines you don't want to be part of the finished drawing (see Figure 10-10).**

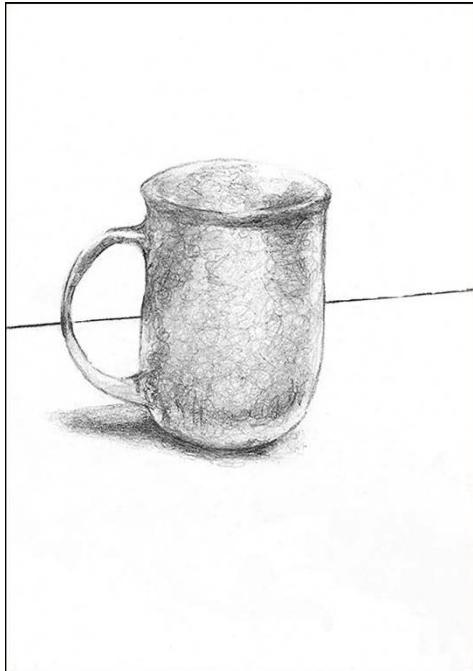


**FIGURE 10-10:**  
Erasing the lines  
you no longer  
need.

*Jamie Combs*

**7. Use whichever shading technique you prefer to shade your object (see Figure 10-11).**

For this step, the artist switched to a 4B pencil and used a graduated tone. (For more information on shading, see Chapter 8.) Be sure to add the line that indicates the table on which your still life sits.



**FIGURE 10-11:**  
Adding life and  
shadows with  
shading.

*Jamie Combs*



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Capturing the various moods of the sky
- » Drawing lifelike trees and flowers
- » Putting your nature-drawing tools to the test with two projects

## Chapter **11**

# Representing the Natural World in Your Drawings

**F**ew drawing subjects have more power to captivate your viewers than nature. Nature is alive and exhilarating with its frequent changes from fierce and unforgiving to gentle and welcoming. Every part of the world, including the one you live in, offers its own exotic reason why you should keep your drawing supplies close at hand whenever you step outside.

Drawing natural phenomena like skies, trees, and flowers is extremely rewarding, but it also poses some unique challenges. For example, how do you draw a sky when it's constantly changing? How do you represent something ephemeral like clouds? How do you make a believable drawing of a tree when its tangle of limbs is almost completely obscured by a million tiny leaves?

In this chapter, you discover answers to these questions and many more. Here, I show you how to embrace nature by re-creating it with your pencil and sketchbook.

Lucky for you, you don't have to figure out how to draw an ever-changing sky or the intricate leaves and limbs of a tree all on your own. You can study the work of the countless artists throughout history who have worked hard to tackle these

types of issues. From Tang Dynasty Chinese floral and landscape paintings (Chinese brush painting is closely aligned with drawing) to Leonardo da Vinci's remarkable "Deluge" drawings, to Stanley Lewis' wild and evocative back yards, to the quietly vibrant hum of Vija Celmins' infinite visions of water and sky, to modern botanical illustrations, you can find numerous techniques and solutions for translating the beautiful intricacies of nature into eye-catching drawings.



TIP

Treat yourself to an afternoon of screentime looking up Chinese landscape painting and the artists I just mentioned. Type *nature drawings* into your favorite search engine to see how other artists render nature in their drawings. Or visit your local library to look for books on nature in art. Look for opportunities to visit art museums and galleries to look at drawing (and all the other kinds of art) in person.

## Exploring Sky and Land



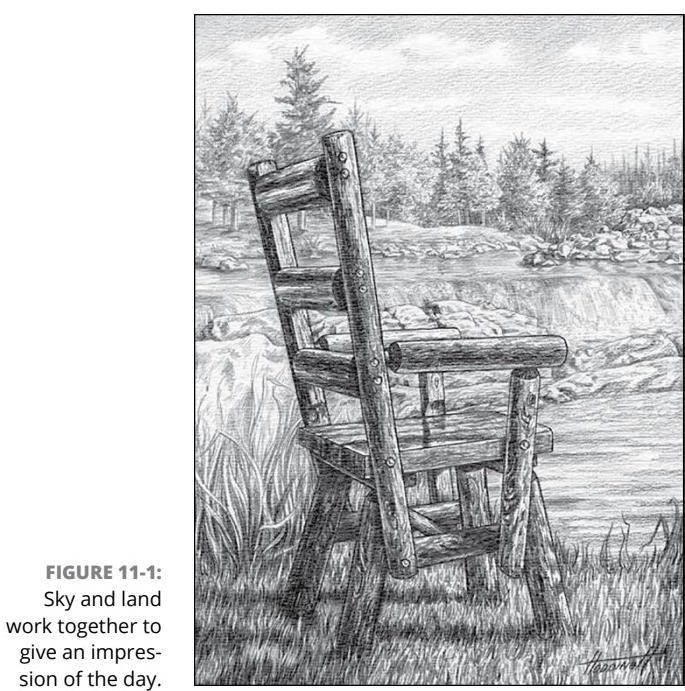
REMEMBER

When you're drawing a landscape, the way you draw the sky needs to complement the way you draw the land. The land is subject to the changes occurring in the sky. For example, when the sun goes down, the Earth gets dark. When a storm rolls in, the ground gets soaked with rain. When a cloud floats by in a clear blue sky, it throws its shadow on an otherwise illuminated hill.

The key to drawing realistic landscapes is remembering that the sky and land are equally important features. Although the sky generally isn't as full of activity as the land, the activity that does take place in the sky gives shape to everything that happens on the land. Take a look at Figure 11-1. Every area of light and shadow in the drawing conspires to create the illusion of a warm afternoon. The distinctive shadows on the grass under the chair tell your eye the sun is powerful and bright.

**Note:** Many artists choose to include some reference to the existence of people in their landscape drawings to represent the relationships people have with nature. For some artists, adding human references to nature drawings gives them the chance to document their own experiences of nature. For others, it allows them to depict nature as a habitat for humans. For still others, it gives them an outlet to critique the way humans sometimes mistreat nature. References to the presence of people can be subtle, such as a worn path through a wooded area or footprints in the snow, or more obvious, such as a birdbath, outdoor chair, buildings, or canoe.

The following sections show you how to combine elements of the sky and land to create well-put-together landscapes so that you can visually express your own experience of nature.



**FIGURE 11-1:**  
Sky and land  
work together to  
give an impres-  
sion of the day.

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## Capturing skies and clouds on paper

Every time you go outside or peek through the windows of your home, take a minute to observe the cloud formations in the sky. Analyze their shapes and forms and note the range of values you see in the clouds themselves and in the sky beyond them. (Note light, medium, and dark shades. See Chapter 8 for more information on value.) Then imagine how you might draw them.

Clouds are in a special class of three-dimensional objects. They aren't exactly solid in the conventional sense, but they do have volume. Although clouds change quickly, especially on windy days, you definitely won't want to give up drawing clouds in person, working only from photos. After all, the subtle beauty that makes clouds so beautiful is often all but lost in photographs.



REMEMBER

As you get ready to draw your first few landscapes, keep in mind that it's more important to get a sense of what the clouds are generally like than to make a portrait of one or two specific clouds. Before you start drawing, spend some time observing the way the clouds look and move. As you do so, ask yourself the following questions to get a better idea of how to represent them on paper:

**» Do the clouds appear to be lighter or darker than the sky?** Focus your drawing energies on whichever element — the clouds or the sky — is darker.

If the sky is darker than the clouds, allow the white of the paper to serve as the white part of the clouds and use your pencils to shade in the sky around the clouds. If the clouds are darker than the sky, focus on rendering the values of the clouds. You can either let the sky be the white of the paper or lightly shade the sky. Just make sure to keep the values lighter in the sky than in the clouds. (See Chapter 8 for more details on shading.)

- » **Are the edges of the clouds firm or filmy?** Even if clouds are somewhat firm looking, they should never have black outlines around them. To make them look as realistic as possible, draw guidelines for the contours of the clouds very lightly so that you can erase them cleanly later. If the edges of the clouds are filmy, make soft, gradual value transitions to gently separate cloud from sky. If the clouds are firm, remember they still aren't made of plastic, so keep a gentle grip on your pencil even as you clearly define the separation between clouds and sky.
- » **If you can see a shadow on a cloud, how much of the cloud does the shadow take up? And is the shadow all one value or are some parts of it darker?** Apply your initial shading to the shadows on clouds more lightly than you think they need to be. You can always build darker values on top of the first values later.



REMEMBER

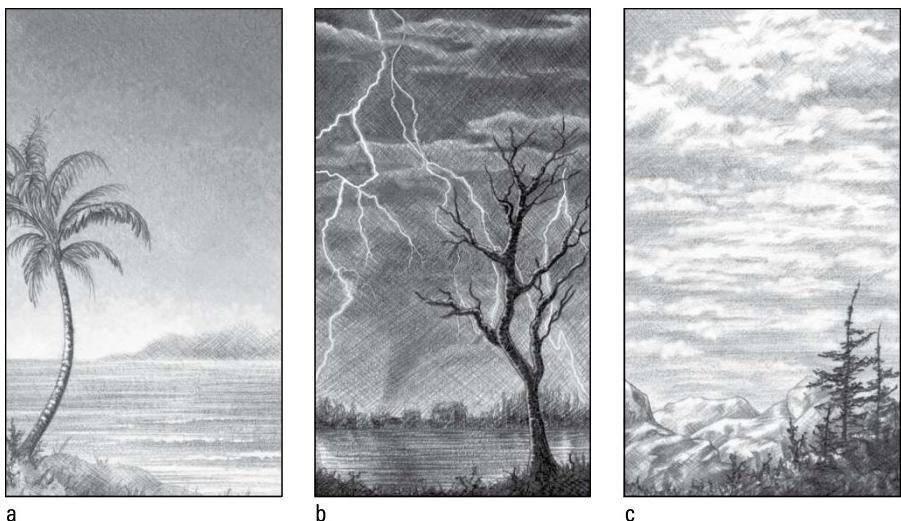
When drawing clouds, remember that perspective affects the forms of clouds in the same way it affects three-dimensional solid objects. That means you can create the illusion that some clouds are farther away than others by the way you draw them. To make clouds look far away, draw them nearer the horizon line, smaller, and lower in contrast. To make clouds look close up, draw them higher in the sky and larger, and higher in contrast. (Find out more about perspective in Chapter 8.)

Figure 11-2 shows three different skies. Think about how the artist rendered each one.

- » **Clear and calm:** The artist of Figure 11-2a creates the illusion of distance in a clear sky using atmospheric perspective. According to the principles of *atmospheric perspective*, you can create a realistic illusion of depth in your drawings by mimicking the effects of the atmosphere on your subjects, reducing the clarity and contrast of objects as they recede in space (see Chapter 7 for more details). In this drawing, the shading graduates from dark at the top of the sky to very light above the horizon line, thereby creating the illusion of depth in this warm, tranquil scene.
- » **Stormy and angry:** In Figure 11-2b, the artist illustrates the sky's power to portray ominous or angry emotions through dramatic value contrast. The sky is dark and crossed by streaks of white lightning, which burst from the clouds

and reflect on the surface of the water. A small section of a dark cloud reaches down toward the land with the potential destructive touch of a tornado.

» **Cloudy and picturesque:** The artist of Figure 11-2c makes the clouds appear soft and gentle by keeping the value contrast low and drawing the edges of the clouds to look soft and filmy. The artist also suggests vast depth in the drawing, using what they know about atmospheric perspective to render a gradual reduction in contrast and clarity to the mountains and clouds as they recede into the background.



**FIGURE 11-2:**  
Representing  
three different  
skies on paper.

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This exercise offers you some practice with drawing clouds, so take a walk outside on a cloudy or partly cloudy day and find a patch of sky you want to draw. Gather your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and your kneaded eraser. Then follow these steps:

**1. With your HB pencil, lightly sketch the shape of the clouds.**

If you're looking at the sky as you draw, the shapes and positions of the clouds may change as you work. Don't worry about it; change the shape if you feel like it or just keep working.

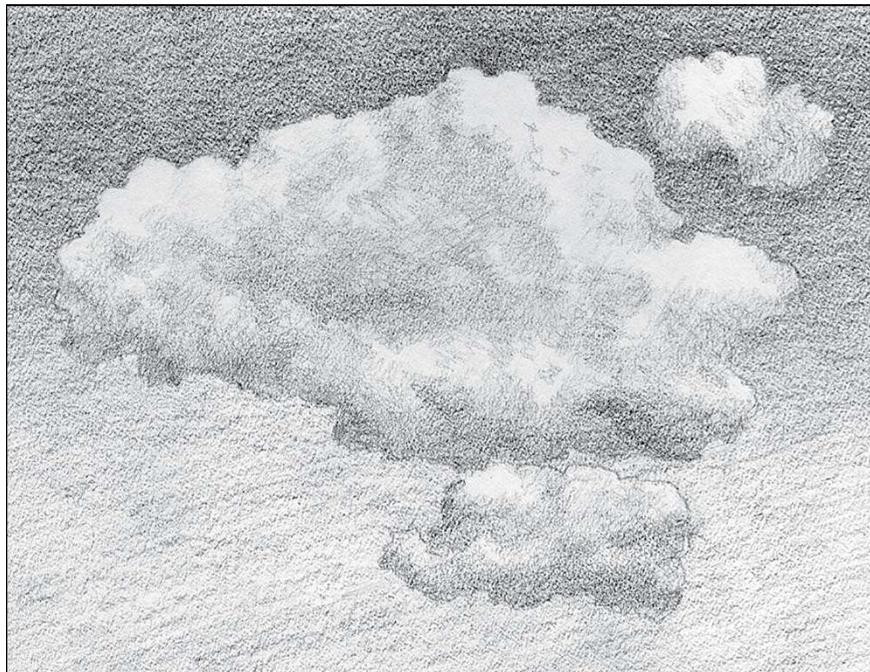
**2. Determine whether the sky or the clouds are darker and use your 2B pencil to begin lightly shading whichever is darker.**

If, as in Figure 11-3, the sky is darker than the clouds but the clouds have shadows on them, lightly shade the sky and the shadows on the clouds. Leave the lightest parts of the clouds the white of the paper.

You can use whichever shading technique you prefer (see Chapter 8 for descriptions of several different techniques). In Figure 11-3, the artist used hatching to add shading to the sky and then to add some light shading to the clouds.

### 3. Use your 4B pencil to add darker values where you need them.

Keep a light pressure on the pencil. Build dark values by layering your shading marks rather than increasing your pressure. If you press too hard on your pencil, your values may get too dark too fast. Once something is too dark, it can be challenging to get it lighter. You can always add darker values.



**FIGURE 11-3:**  
Rendering  
realistic clouds.

*Barbara Frake*

## Examining and drawing trees

When you were little, you probably thought you knew how to draw trees — a rectangle for the trunk and a rounded blob for the treetop for deciduous trees and a triangular mass of diagonal lines on top of a short rectangular stump for evergreens. Your memory of this symbolic way of drawing trees can get in the way as you try to draw realistic trees in your landscapes. After all, the basic tree symbols you used as a child don't really correspond to what you see when you look at an actual tree.

At the same time, though, the basic tree symbols can provide a little guidance as you begin a drawing of a tree. As explained in Chapter 6, it's very helpful to simplify your drawing subjects into their most basic shapes when you first start drawing them, and the basic rectangle and circle shapes you used as a child to draw trees can help you simplify trees as you draw them now.



TIP

If your mind tries to hang on to the basic tree symbol too much, keeping you from rendering realistic trees, take a close look at a real tree in your backyard. Forget what you already know about trees and simply see and experience the tree as it is. Then read on to find out how to draw that tree as it is.

This section offers a few tips you can use to take some of the mystery out of drawing trees. It also shows you how to draw groups of trees in the distance as well as draw individual trees right in front of you.

## Draw distant trees

Distant trees look the most like the symbolic trees of your childhood, but to draw them realistically, you need to call on more than just simple shapes, as you can see in this section.



TIP

Most of the time trees in the distance appear to be part of a mass with other trees. So to draw them, you need to start by thinking of the mass instead of trying to draw each individual tree. If you can see the trunks from where you are, start with the mass of treetops and then add the individual trunks.



SKETCHBOOK

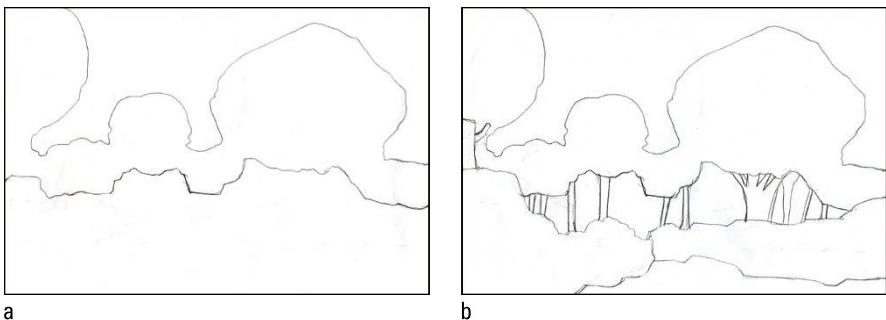
To practice drawing a mass of trees in the distance, grab your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and kneaded and vinyl erasers. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Using your HB pencil, draw one big shape that combines all the treetops in the mass of trees (see Figure 11-4a).**
- 2. Draw the basic shapes of the trunks and any other objects surrounding the trees that you want to include in your landscape (see Figure 11-4b).**

Keep the trunks and other objects simple for now. Just try to get the basic shapes in as quickly as you can; you can worry about making them more accurate later.
- 3. Using your 2B pencil, add some light shading to the trees, trunks, and other objects to make them look more realistic (see Figure 11-5a).**

See Chapter 8 for more details on shading.

**FIGURE 11-4:**  
Drawing the basic  
shapes of the  
treetops and then  
the trunks.



Kensuke Okabayashi

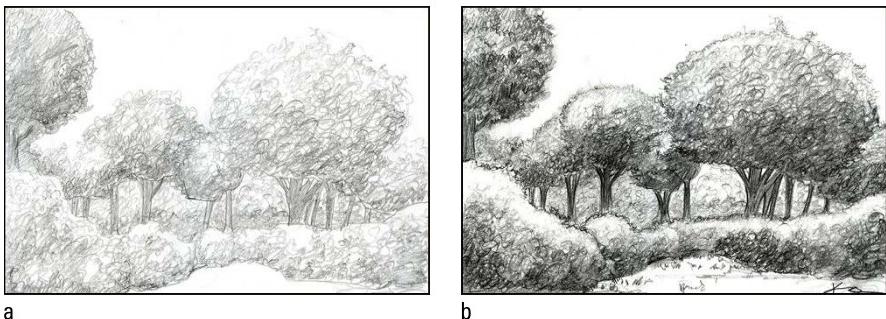
**4. Using your 4B pencil, add darker shading to the areas where the shadows of the trees and other objects are darker (see Figure 11-5b).**



REMEMBER

To enhance the illusion of depth, remember to incorporate atmospheric perspective into your drawing. According to the principle of *atmospheric perspective*, the farther back something is in space, the smaller and less distinct it appears. Therefore, add the darkest values to the trees nearest the front, and reduce the dark values gradually as the trees work their way back in space. (See Chapter 7 for more details on atmospheric perspective.)

**FIGURE 11-5:**  
Refining a mass  
of distant trees  
by shading.



Kensuke Okabayashi

## Sketch nearby individual trees

Drawing realistic-looking individual trees is a lot easier than you may think. After all, drawing a tree is just like drawing any other object; you just have to break the process down into smaller, more manageable steps. This section shows you how to do just that.

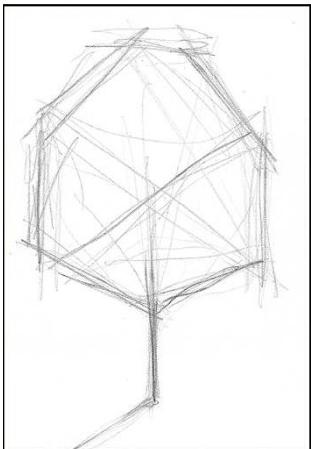


SKETCHBOOK

For this exercise, you need your sketchbook, 2B, 4B, and 6B pencils, and both your vinyl and kneaded erasers. After you've gathered your supplies, find a tree you want to draw and follow these steps:

1. Spend some time observing the tree you want to draw and use your 2B pencil to make a few gesture drawings of it.

See Chapter 13 for instructions on gesture drawing. Figure 11-6 shows an example of a gesture drawing of a tree.



**FIGURE 11-6:**  
Gesture drawing  
of a tree.

*Jamie Combs*

2. Choose one gesture drawing to use as a skeleton for developing a drawing of a tree and use your 2B pencil to draw the simple shapes that make up the trunk and treetop (see Figure 11-7).

If the treetop has so many gaps in foliage or the branches are so bare that you can't see it as a whole shape, squint your eyes to minimize the appearance of the gaps in the foliage. Use the gesture drawing as a guide for where to place your shapes. Draw the simple shapes right on top of the gesture drawing. Don't worry about how many lines you're making. You'll lighten all your lines later.

3. Use your 2B pencil to refine the shapes of the tree to make them look more realistic (see Figure 11-8).

Two important elements that you need to refine in this step are the contours of the foliage and the place where the trunk meets the treetop.

4. Erase any lines you don't need and use your 2B pencil to lightly apply shading to the shadow areas of the trunk and treetop and to add simple textures (see Figure 11-9).

Choose a shading technique that allows you to mimic the texture of a leafy tree, but don't try to copy the texture exactly. The trick is to look at the leaves while you're working and move your pencil in a way that feels leaf-like. See Chapter 8 for more information on the different shading techniques you can use.

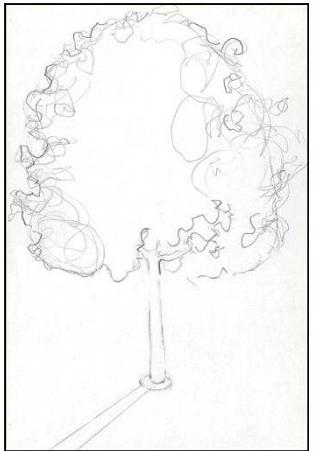


TIP



**FIGURE 11-7:**  
The simple  
shapes that make  
up a tree.

*Jamie Combs*

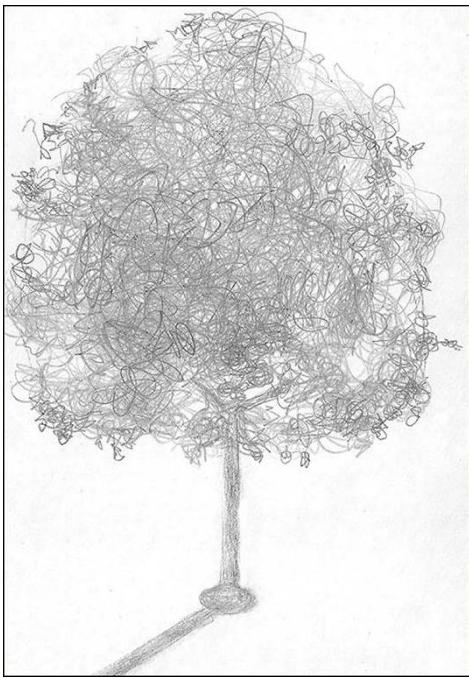


**FIGURE 11-8:**  
Refining the  
simple shapes to  
make them look  
more realistic.

*Jamie Combs*

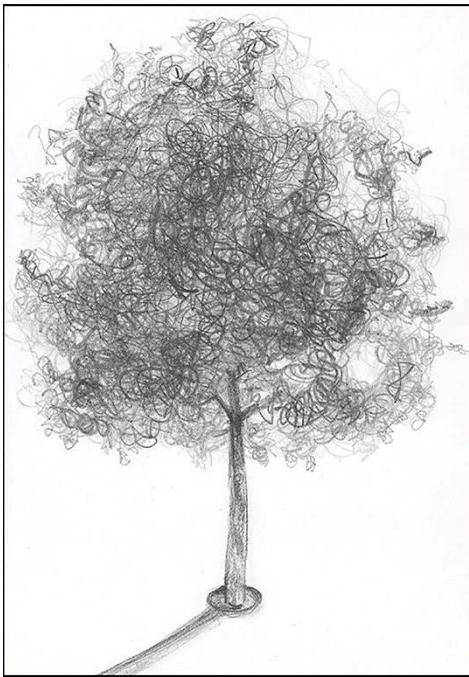
**5. Use your 4B and 6B pencils to refine the shading and complete the drawing (see Figure 11-10).**

After you establish your basic dark values, use your 4B pencil and a light, steady pressure to build darker values where you need them. Then switch to your 6B pencil and add your darkest darks.



**FIGURE 11-9:**  
Applying shading  
to add values and  
textures.

*Jamie Combs*



**FIGURE 11-10:**  
Finished drawing  
of a tree.

*Jamie Combs*

# Creating convincing flowers

Whether you're in a formal garden or a field of California poppies, flowers make a fun subject for drawing. And, lucky for you, they're easier to draw than you may think! After all, you don't have to replicate every single petal of a flower exactly as it looks in real life to create a realistic-looking flower drawing.

To get a little practice with drawing flowers, find some floral models and draw them from various points of view. Try to capture the grandeur of a massive sunflower, the delicacy of a simple daisy, and the intricate details of a rose. Grab a few flower petals and leaves and make close-up sketches of their shape and textures. Notice how their unique qualities impact the overall look of the flower itself. Then keep reading to find out how to make complete, realistic drawings of both groups of flowers and individual flowers.

## Draw groups of flowers

The key to drawing bunches of distant flowers so they look real on paper is to simplify the scene as much as you can. Dedicate most of your time to getting the value contrasts right. In other words, treat flowers surrounded by greenery as masses of flower value set against masses of greenery value.

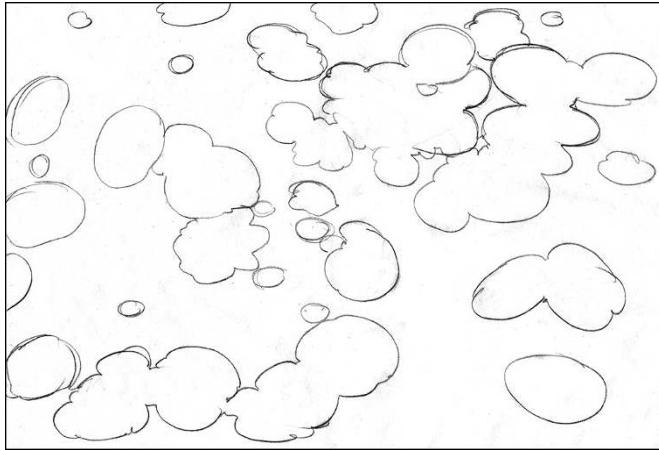


To draw a group of flowers such as the ones in this sample exercise, grab your sketchbook, HB and 2B pencils, and kneaded eraser. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Use your HB pencil to lightly draw the simple rounded shapes made by each flower in the group (see Figure 11-11).**

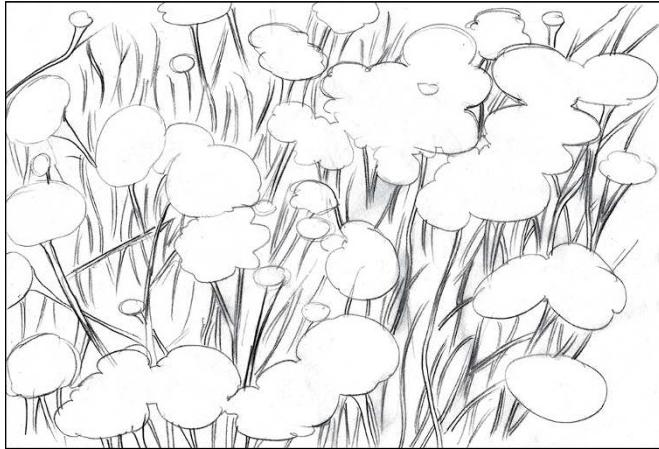
Don't try to draw individual petals! If you're looking at flowers from a distance, you can't see the petals clearly anyway. Plus, the point is to break down the flowers into their basic shapes so that you can get their positions right. Then you can focus on adding more detail.
- 2. Draw the stems of the flowers, as shown in Figure 11-12.**
- 3. Use your 2B pencil to add shading to represent the greenery surrounding the masses of flowers (see Figure 11-13).**

See Chapter 8 for some ideas about rendering textures and value with shading.



**FIGURE 11-11:**  
Drawing the basic  
shapes of the  
flowers in a  
group.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

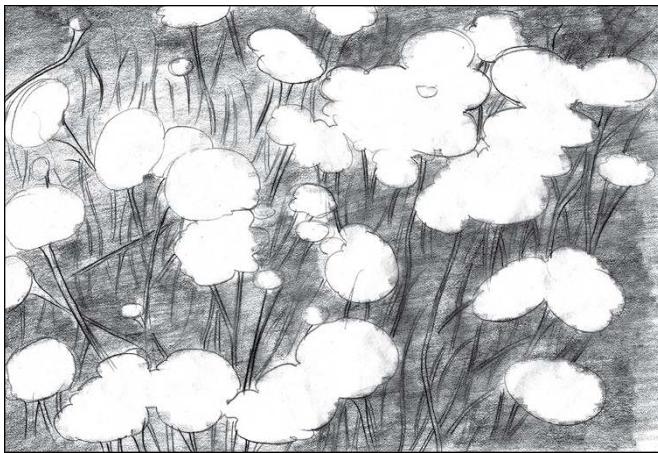


**FIGURE 11-12:**  
Continuing the  
drawing by filling  
in the stems.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

**4. Use your 2B pencil to add light shading to differentiate the various types of flowers in the mass (see Figure 11-14).**

For example, purple petunias tend to be darker than peonies, so add darker values to any purple petunias (or other dark flowers) you see in your flower group. In Figure 11-14, the artist chose to showcase lighter flowers. In this case, shading in the stems in the background makes the light-colored flowers pop.



**FIGURE 11-13:**  
Using shading to  
add texture to  
your drawing.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*



**FIGURE 11-14:**  
Adding value to  
the various types  
of flowers in a  
group.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

**5. Use your 4B pencil to refine the range of value and make the flowers and greenery look more realistic (see Figure 11-15).**

Turn your attention to the flowers, greenery, and any other objects that are nearest the front of the drawing. Increase the range of value slowly. Build toward strong darks that emphasize the shadows nearest the front of the drawing. Don't get too fussy.

Here, your goal is to refine the masses of flowers just enough to make them look finished without refining them so much that they lose their cohesiveness as a group.



**FIGURE 11-15:**  
Refining a mass  
of flowers  
without sacrific-  
ing unity.

Kensuke Okabayashi

## Focus on individual flowers

If you want to draw just one flower rather than a group of flowers, get ready to be a little more detailed. Although you don't have to draw each petal exactly as you see it to make a flower look realistic, you do need to be specific about the character of your particular flower so that your viewers can identify it fairly easily.



TIP

Before you start drawing individual flowers, spend a little time just looking at a flower model. Look at the way its petals grow out from the center and the way they overlap each other. Examine the back of the flower to see the way the flower connects to its stem. Then you can start drawing.

Like with any object you draw, first simplify the flower into its simple shapes. (You can use a gesture drawing to do so; find out about gesture drawing in Chapter 13.) Gradually refine the drawing to add shadows and other values that make the flower look real.

Figure 11-16 shows an example of a finished drawing of a flower. Notice how the artist incorporates the following characteristics to make this flower look real:

- » **The petals are imperfect triangular shapes that undulate gently away from the center of the flower.** The floppiness and irregularity of the petals help make the flower as a whole look real.
- » **The petals interact with each other and with the flower's center in a way that makes them appear to grow out of the center.** Each petal seems to tuck underneath the center because of the shadows being cast on the petals by the center. When a petal overlaps another petal, the front petal casts a shadow on the petal behind it.



REMEMBER

It's important to draw flowers from life because you learn a lot about the way flowers are by trying to draw them. As you draw, pay attention to the idiosyncrasies of the particular flower you're looking at. When you turn off your preconceptions and make an effort to draw something exactly as it is, you make discoveries about it that you simply wouldn't be able to make otherwise.



*Jamie Combs*

**FIGURE 11-16:**  
Noticing the way  
parts of flowers  
interact.

# Project: Using Your Eraser to Create a White Winter

In this project, you draw a landscape using a combination of subtractive and additive drawing techniques. In other words, you draw the light values with your erasers and the dark values and shadows with your charcoal pencil. (See Chapter 8 for more details on subtractive and additive drawing.)



**SKETCHBOOK**

To get started, grab your sketchbook, vinyl and kneaded erasers, a 2B stick of charcoal, a tissue or paper towel, and a 4B or 6B charcoal pencil. Then follow these steps to create the landscape drawing shown in Figure 11-17:

- 1. Draw a rectangle that's approximately 10 x 5 inches.**
- 2. Shade in the entire rectangle with your stick of charcoal.**

Use the side of your charcoal instead of the end — it's a lot faster that way. Try to maintain a dark middle value throughout the rectangle; you can lighten up this initial shading later.

- 3. With a piece of paper towel or a soft tissue, gently rub the whole surface until you have one solid tone.**
- 4. Use your kneaded eraser to begin erasing or pulling out light areas in your landscape.**



**TIP**

When you draw with an eraser, try to imagine that you're actually drawing light. For example, look at the five trees in Figure 11-17; the artist basically erased the light onto the trees to make them show up in the drawing. The gray of the paper becomes the middle value of all the objects, as well as the sky and the ground, while the two light areas that the artist added on the lower-right and lower-left sides of the drawing represent white snow.

- 5. Dab the paper with your kneaded eraser to draw more snow on the ground (see Figure 11-18).**

Be sure not to add too many light values. Note that the water and lots of shadowy areas in the figure are still the same dark value as the original charcoal shading.

- 6. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten up the sky in your landscape.**

Notice how the artist of Figure 11-18 outlined some dark trees in the background while lightening the sky. By leaving these sections of the paper dark, the trees in the background become well defined against the lighter values of the sky.



**FIGURE 11-17:**  
Using your  
kneaded eraser  
to draw light onto  
the trees and  
snow.

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- 7. Switch to your vinyl eraser and use a sharp edge to pull out some brighter areas, such as the banks of the stream shown in Figure 11-18.**
  - 8. Lighten the left side of all the trees a little more with the sharp edge of your vinyl eraser.**
- By lightening the left side of all the trees, you establish the light source for your landscape, adding dimension and life to the drawing.
- 9. Use your vinyl eraser to lighten the areas of snow that aren't in shadow.**
  - 10. Add a third small trunk of a tree on the left side of the landscape (refer to Figure 11-18).**



**FIGURE 11-18:**  
Using your  
kneaded eraser  
to draw the sky  
and lighten up  
the lighter areas  
of the landscape.

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- 11.** Draw more branches on the deciduous trees with the sharp edge of your vinyl eraser (see Figure 11-19).
- 12.** Press firmly with your vinyl eraser to add some really light values to the left sides of the deciduous trees and to clearly define the edges of their trunks.
- 13.** Press firmly with your vinyl eraser to add a few very white highlights to the snow on the ground and on the branches of the fir trees.
- 14.** Use a very sharp edge of your vinyl eraser to draw some thin white lines in the stream to look like ice (refer to Figure 11-19).



**FIGURE 11-19:**  
Press firmly with the edge of your vinyl eraser to add the lightest lights to your landscape.

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- 15.** Use your charcoal pencil to add darker details and shadows to your drawing (see Figure 11-20).

Notice the darkest marks are in areas where you would expect to find cast shadows, such as beneath the evergreen boughs and at the points where the large limbs of nearby deciduous trees branch from the trunks.

- 16.** Check to make sure that your dark and light values appear to have the right contrast; touch up any areas you aren't happy with by adding (or taking away) value.

**FIGURE 11-20:**  
Adding the  
darkest and  
lightest values to  
complete your  
landscape.



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## Project: Lovely Lily

This project shows you how to simplify the details of a flower so that you can draw its most important elements. Although this project is based on drawing a lily from start to finish, you can use these steps to draw any flower.



SKETCHBOOK

When you're ready to start drawing a flower, grab your sketchbook, your HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and your vinyl and kneaded erasers; then follow these steps:

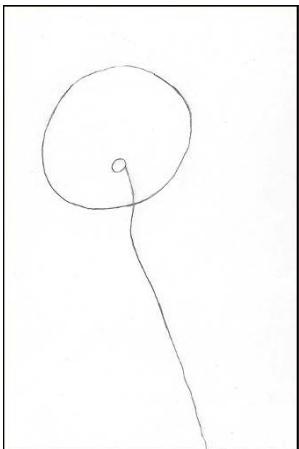
1. **Use your HB pencil to draw a large, rounded shape to represent the main part of the flower (see Figure 11-21).**

You can draw most flowers by reducing them to simple circular shapes set at various angles. To get the angle of your flower's shape right, keep your eyes trained on the flower while you draw its main part. Find a starting point on your paper and set your pencil there. Without looking at the paper, move your arm in a circular motion to search for the right shape. Imagine that you're drawing on the flower and try to feel the line around its perimeter. You will make extra lines on the way to finding the right shape, but don't worry; you can erase them later.

2. **Add a small, rounded shape inside the large one to mark the center of the flower.**

3. **Draw a single line to represent the centerline of the stem (refer to Figure 11-21).**

It's much easier to capture the curve of a linear object (like a stem) if you imagine a line running through the center of it. Draw that line first; then you can draw the stem around the centerline.



**FIGURE 11-21:**  
Drawing the basic  
shape of the  
flower.

*Jamie Combs*

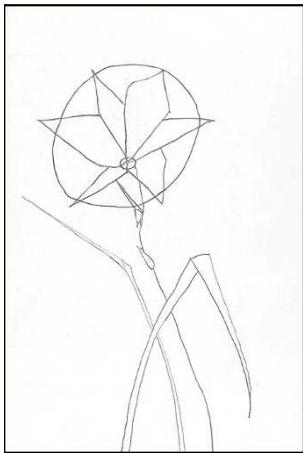
4. **Draw the simple, flat shapes that make up the petals and leaves of the flower, making sure that each one originates from the center of the flower (see Figure 11-22).**

Individual petals and leaves each have their own character. Some curve, some droop, some are perky, and depending on your perspective, some are shorter, thinner, and so on. The goal here is to see each petal as a simple, flat shape and draw that shape. If you have trouble with a petal, it may help to imagine it behind a piece of glass and then trace a line around the outside of it.

5. **Draw a single line to represent the centerline of each of the flower's stamens and top each one with a rounded shape (see Figure 11-23).**

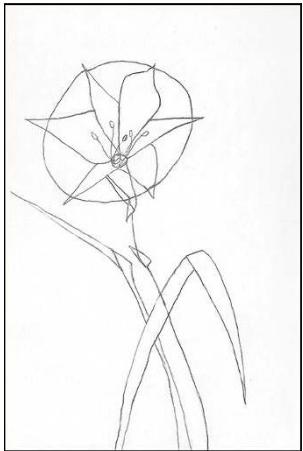
The flower's *stamens* are the shorter stemlike parts of the flower that protrude from its center.

6. **Use your kneaded eraser to lighten all your sketch lines until you can barely see them.**



**FIGURE 11-22:**  
Drawing the  
simple shapes  
that make up the  
flower's petals  
and leaves.

*Jamie Combs*



**FIGURE 11-23:**  
Drawing the  
centerlines of the  
flower's stamens.

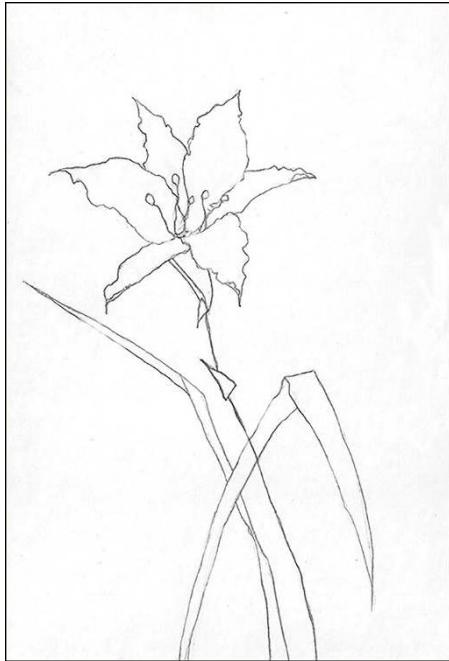
*Jamie Combs*

**7. Switch to your 2B pencil and refine the shape of each petal (see Figure 11-24).**

Look at whichever petal you're working on and adjust the contour of the simple shape you made so that it's a more sensitive reflection of what you actually see.

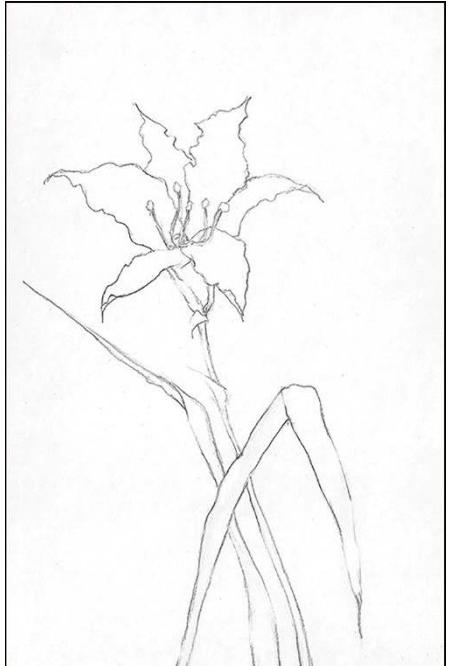
**8. Using the centerlines you drew in Steps 3 and 5 as a guide, refine the contours of the flower's stem and stamens (see Figure 11-25).**

As you glance along the stem, look for places where the edge of the stem looks light and where it looks dark. Use your 2B pencil to retrace only the parts of the stem that appear dark.



**FIGURE 11-24:**  
Refining the  
shape of each  
petal to make the  
drawing look  
more accurate.

*Jamie Combs*



**FIGURE 11-25:**  
Refining the  
contours of the  
flower's stem and  
stamens.

*Jamie Combs*

- 9. Refine the contours of any leaves on the flower.**
- 10. Use your 2B pencil to lightly apply shading to the shadowy parts of the flower and stem (see Figure 11-26).**

See Chapter 8 for everything you need to know about applying shading to your drawings.



**FIGURE 11-26:**  
Applying light  
shading to the  
shadowy areas of  
the flower and  
stem.

*Jamie Combs*

- 11. Use your 4B pencil to darken any shadows that appear darker than the shading you added in Step 10 (see Figure 11-27).**

Pay special attention to places where leaves or petals overlap each other.



**FIGURE 11-27:**  
Adding the  
darkest values to  
complete the  
drawing.

*Jamie Combs*



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Shading to render realistic textures
- » Drawing fur to show the animal's form
- » Drawing animal portraits
- » Putting your animal-drawing techniques to the test with a fun project

## Chapter **12**

# Bringing Animals to Life on Paper

**A**rtists have been drawing animals since prehistoric times. Surprisingly enough, the techniques used to create cave drawings aren't that different from the ones you and other artists use today. Whether you're interested in drawing lifelike renditions of your pets or you want to capture the essence of creatures in the wild, you've come to the right place.

In this chapter, you discover strategies for making animal drawings come vibrantly to life. You find out how to capture the spirit of an animal through the posture of its body and how to create realistic textures to describe fins, scales, fur and feathers. Finally, you get the chance to practice drawing a whole animal. Although I show just a few specific animals in this chapter, you can use the techniques and strategies you find here to draw any kind of animal.



TIP

Animals rarely hold still long enough for you to tackle anything beyond quick sketches, so have a camera handy when you're scouting animal subjects. Take pictures of any animals you'd like to draw, but make sure that you draw a few on-the-spot sketches of the animals, too. Later you can synthesize information from the sketches and photographs to create a complete drawing. (Toward the end of this chapter, I show you how to do just that!)

# Rendering Finned, Scaly, Furry, and Feathered Textures

The sheer variety of coats that animals come dressed in may make your head spin. Fur, feathers, scales, and fins, stripes, spots, and calico, shiny, fuzzy, silky . . . I could fill this page (and probably several more) with all the different textures you find on animals. Fortunately, with only a few tricks up your sleeve, you can draw them all.

No matter what animal captures your imagination, you can draw it using lines, shapes, and values. All you have to do is get the shapes and values in your drawing to mimic what they do in real life. After you master that technique, you can draw just about anything — with a little practice and patience, of course!



REMEMBER

Here are a few pointers to keep in mind when you're drawing fins, scales, fur or feathers:

- » Whatever animal attribute you're trying to draw, pay attention to the direction it grows and/or how it moves. When you're shading, try to feel your marks onto the page following the direction of growth and movement.
- » Ask yourself what you really see when you look at your drawing subject. What you know about a thing can get in the way of seeing it in a way that is helpful for drawing. Examine your subject's lines, shapes, and values. See Chapter 6 for more details. Look carefully before you start drawing and take frequent breaks to look again while you're working. Spend as much time looking as drawing.
- » A convincing illusion of texture depends mostly on the interaction between values.

The following sections take a closer look at how to add finned, scaly, furry, and feathered textures to your animal drawings to make them really come alive.

## Getting your feet wet with fins

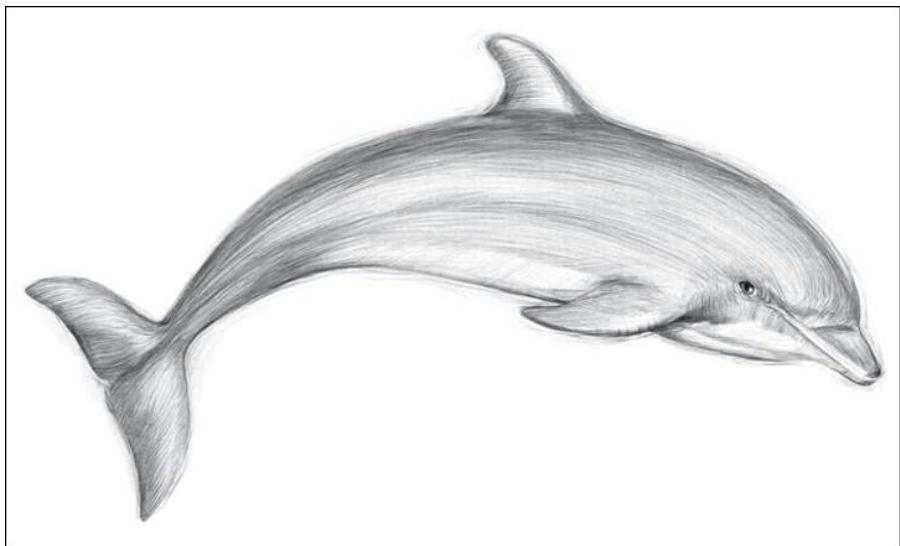
Fins are structures attached to aquatic animals like fish, whales, and dolphins. These animals use their fins for locomotion and balance. Fins come in a variety of shapes and sizes that fall into two basic categories, the firm, flipper-like fins (think sharks and porpoises) and the ethereal, translucent fins found on fish. Take a peek at Figure 12-1. In case you are wondering what flippers are, they are broad, thin appendages attached to aquatic vertebrates like manatees and penguins.

Like fins, flippers are used for propulsion. Fins and flippers are different but similar enough that the words are often used interchangeably even though, technically, this is incorrect. Fortunately, you do not need to tell the difference between

a fin and a flipper to draw either. If you can draw one, you can apply the same principles to draw the other. I show you how to draw fins. To find out more about the structure of various aquatic creatures, check out the book, *Oceans For Dummies!*

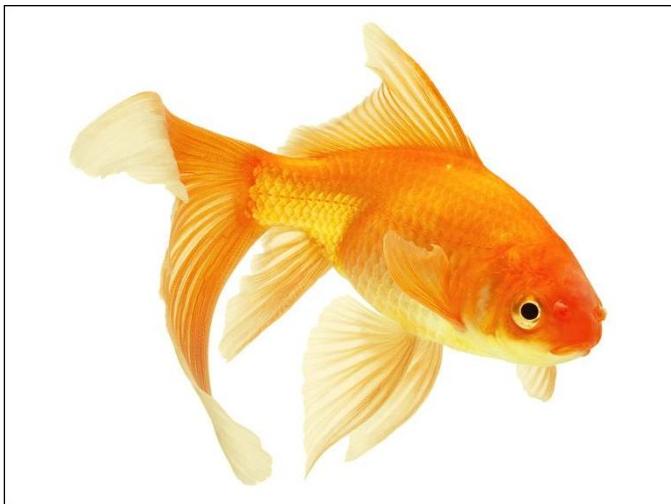
To draw a flipper-like fin like the one on the dolphin in Figure 12-1, focus on shape and value. The artist who made this drawing mapped out the dolphin's body by capturing its gesture and translating the body into simple shapes. (See Chapter 6 for more on gesture and seeing simple shapes.) Then they checked the proportions of their drawing against the proportions in their subject and used line-weight variation to refine the contours of the dolphin's body. (Chapter 6 has information about how to manage proportions and take advantage of line weight variation.) Once the line drawing was worked out, the artist could focus on value.

The fleshy solidity of the flipper like fin in Figure 12-1 comes from the union of line, shape, and value. Its basic shape is a triangle, but look at how it's different from a true, geometric triangle. The curved lines start to turn a triangle into a fin. The volumetric appearance of the fin and its shiny surface come from value. (See Chapter 8 to learn all about shading and Chapter 9 to learn how to use shading to show texture.)



**FIGURE 12-1:**  
Dolphins have  
flipper-like fins.

The fins you find on fish offer a different set of drawing challenges. Fish fins come in an array of shapes and sizes. They tend to be made of webbed skin stretched over a set of bony projections. This structure allows for the flexible, sometimes undulating movement associated with goldfish like the one in Figure 12-2. Furthermore, fish fins are often translucent. There is a lot to think about with such a complex subject, but if you start with what's most essential and gradually build toward greater levels of specificity, it feels a lot more manageable.



**FIGURE 12-2:**  
Goldfish fins are  
translucent.

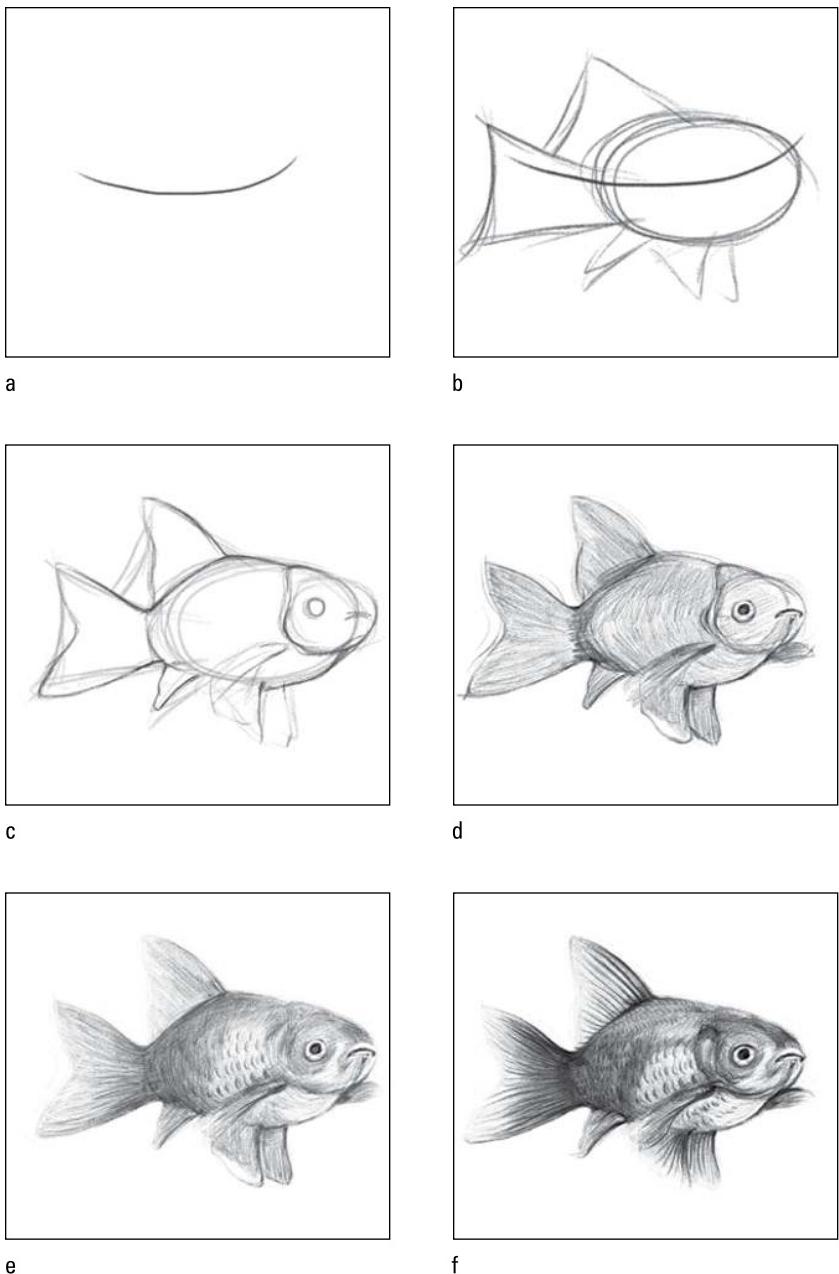
To see how this works, check out Figure 12-3 and read the list of step-by-step instructions for drawing the goldfish pictured in Figure 12-2. Follow along by copying the drawings you see in Figure 12-3 or use your own photo of a fish. Bonus points if you try drawing from a live fish!

- 1. Draw a line that represents the main line of direction through the body of the fish (see Figure 12-3a).**
- 2. Break the fish into simple shapes. Loosely and quickly sketch the shapes where they go in relation to the axis line (see Figure 12-3b).**
- 3. Refine the shapes into a contour drawing of the body of the fish. Add facial features (see Figure 12-3c).**
- 4. Examine the values in your reference.**

Mentally simplify the values you see into just two — light and shadow. Add a base layer of value to everything that falls into the shadow category (see Figure 12-3d).
- 5. Look at your reference again. Notice places where there is extra darkness.**

In this case, the eyes, the front edge of the fin on top of the fish, and some of the scales. Add a layer of darker values to your drawing where you need them (see Figure 12-3e).
- 6. Add details and refine the drawing.**

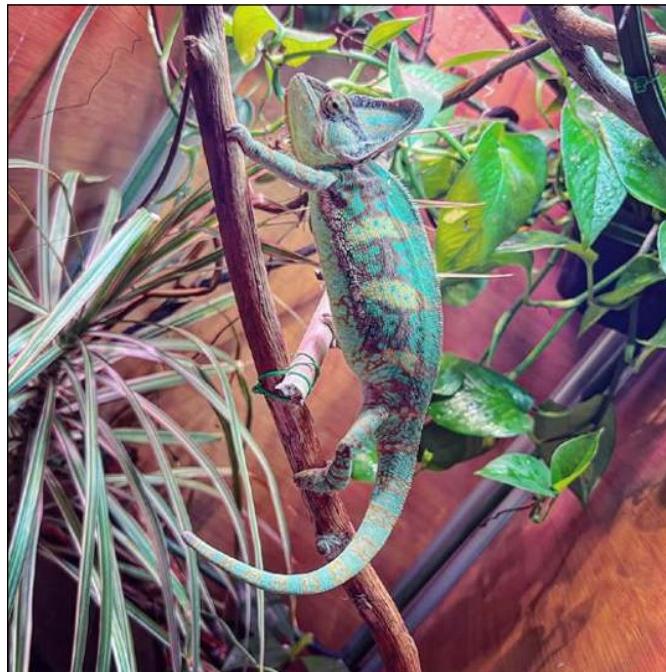
Use an eraser to lighten any areas that have become too dark. Draw the bony lines you see in the fin. Darken any values that need to be darker (see Figure 12-3f).



**FIGURE 12-3:**  
Drawing a fish in  
six steps.

## Sizing up scales

Some animals, like fish, lizards, and pangolins, have plate-like scales on their skin. Scales are like little shields, protecting the animal from harm. Since scales are part of the skin, they conform to the contours of the body. The key to drawing scales and scaly animals is getting the values right. The key to getting the values right is careful observation. Figure 12-4 is a picture of a friend's pet lizard, Pascali. Pascali is the total package — scaly body, pattern, and a fabulous head.



**FIGURE 12-4:**  
Scales are part of  
the skin.

*Photo courtesy of Jess Cox*

Drawing a scaly animal is a great way to practice looking past what you expect to see. The skin of a lizard is covered with scales and yet, looking at Pascali, you can see that the scales don't stand out much from a normal viewing distance. You know they're there, and yet, what you notice are the pattern and the way the skin stretches here and folds there. On closer inspection, you can see some scales. What makes them stand out is the dark lines that happen where two or more scales come together.

Looking closely, you can also see that each scale is unique in size and shape. Furthermore, since the scales are part of the skin, where the skin folds, the scales shift in position along with the skin. Figure 12-5 is a close up drawing of Pascali's scales.

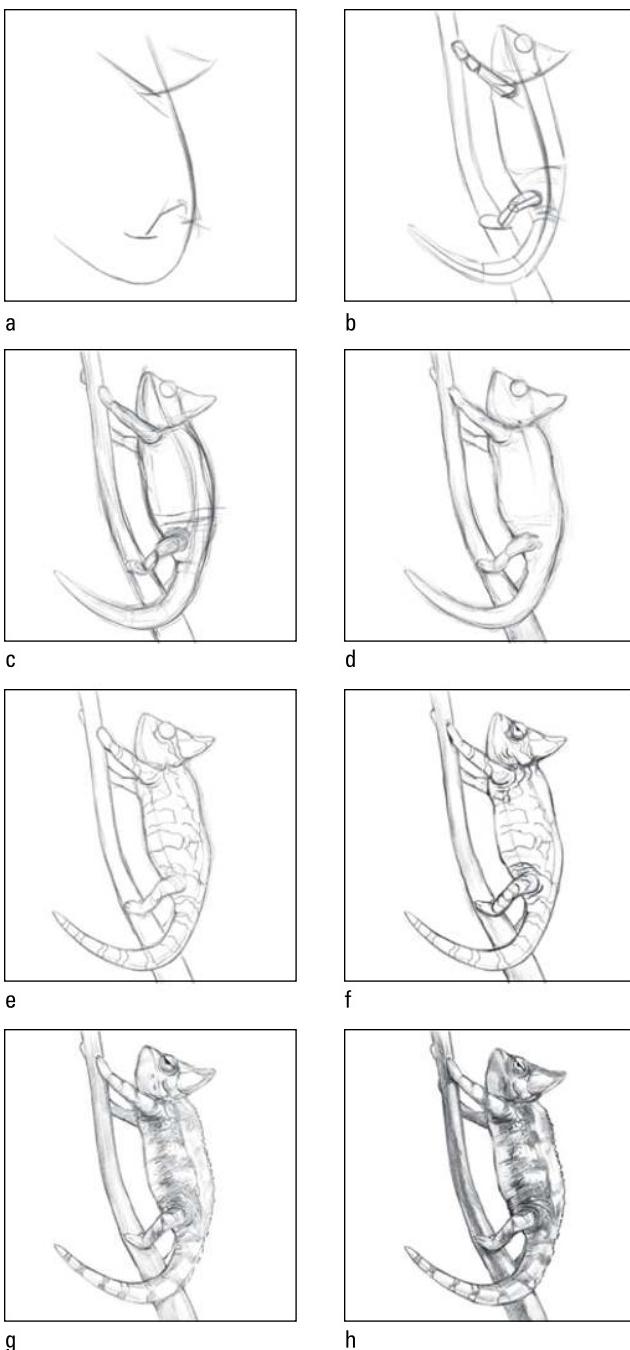


**FIGURE 12-5:**  
Close-up view of  
scales.

Try making a drawing of a scaly animal. Figure 12-6 shows an eight-stage process for drawing Pascal. In the first two figures, the artist started with a gesture drawing and then used simple shapes to construct the body. (See Chapter 6 for details.) In the next two images, they refined the shapes into a line drawing and used an eraser to remove extraneous lines. The third set of figures shows the artist lightly sketching the pattern on the skin and adjusting the weight of the contour lines. In the last two images, you can see how the artist used shading to block in the pattern and values of the body and finally punched up the darkest values to resolve the drawing.

## Identifying the long and short of fur

Whether it's long or short, fur reveals the underlying structures of an animal's body. Because short fur closely follows the contours of an animal's body, for example, you can easily see the bone structure and superficial muscles of the animal beneath it. Long fur obscures the appearance of some of the more subtle aspects of an animal's structure, but the prominent, rounded forms of an animal's body still push against the fur to create swells and valleys that you can see no matter how long or fluffy the fur is.



**FIGURE 12-6:**  
Drawing a lizard  
in eight stages.



REMEMBER

Regardless of how long or short the fur on your drawing subject is, follow these guidelines:

- » Use hatching lines to render the texture of most types of fur (see Chapters 8 and 9 for more details). To make fur look short, draw short, mostly curved hatching lines; draw long, curved hatching lines to create the illusion of long fur.
- » You can use an eraser to “draw” light onto the fur or feathers. Use a pencil or charcoal to draw the strands of fur. Then, use a clean edge of your vinyl eraser or a retractable stick eraser to draw light onto strands. Finally, go back with your pencil or charcoal and darken spaces between the lightened strands.
- » Use bold, thick marks to give the illusion of coarse fur and use gentle, thin marks to make fur look soft.



TIP

Rendering texture accurately takes tenacity. When you’re drawing something like a furry dog’s ear, you can’t afford to let your mind wander away from the subject. If you lose focus, it is easy to fall back on clichés about what fur is like. If you find your mind wandering, take a break and come back to your drawing later with a fresh eye. Trust me, you’ll be glad you did!

## Draw short fur

Whenever you draw fur on an animal, you create an illusion of three-dimensional volume (or form) at the same time that you render the furry texture. This concept is especially true when you’re drawing short fur because it follows the animal’s form so closely. To create the most realistic illusion of volume on your short-fur animals, you need to use accurate values to represent their fur. (See Chapter 7 for more on creating three-dimensional illusion and Chapter 9 for more on combining texture and three-dimensional form.)

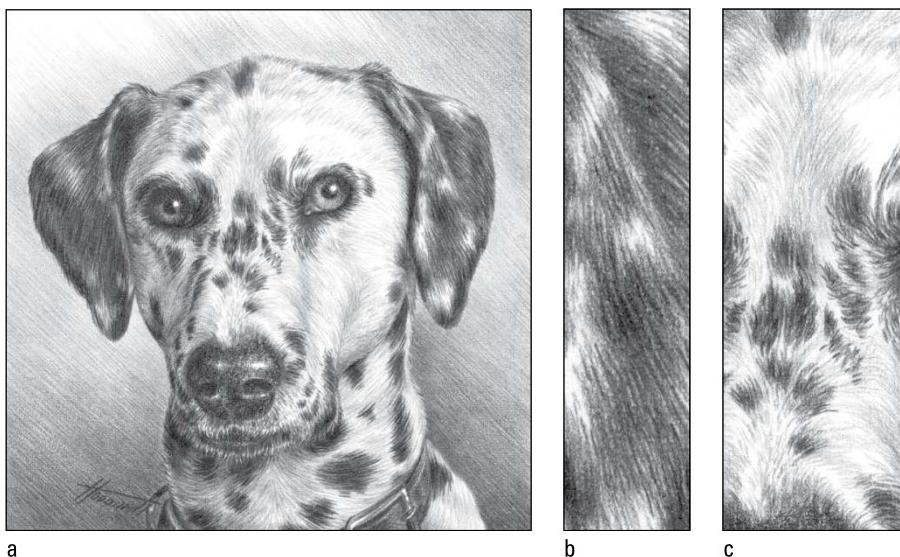


REMEMBER

To increase the accuracy of your furry values, keep your marks light and soft in the beginning. (If you press too hard or make your marks too dark too early, your drawing may end up looking flat.) Instead of using firmer pressure to darken your values, aim to build darker values by layering. When you have a light foundation layer, switch to softer (darker) pencils like 4Bs and 6Bs to add the darker layers of value where you need it.

Pay attention to the direction of the fur’s growth. To make it easier to draw your marks in the direction of the fur, imagine that you’re brushing the animal’s coat with your pencil. The goal is to draw a coat of fur that wraps around the form of the animal’s body.

Look at Figure 12-7a. Notice the way the dog's short fur traces curves around the eyebrows, snout, and neck. Then check out the close-up of the ear in Figure 12-7b. Look closely at the white spots. Notice that the white spots aren't firmly defined shapes; instead, the strands of dark fur that ring around the spots meet the edge of the spots in a jagged way. Also observe the way the hairs curve out, down, and up like gentle waves. If you were drawing this dog's ear, you'd need to make your marks in the direction that follows the form they're supposed to lie on. Naturally, you'd have to change the direction of your marks along with changes in the surface of the dog's body. Look at Figure 12-7c to see all the different values, from white to medium gray, that the artist used to represent the light fur on the dog's snout. A range of values from medium gray to black depicts the dark fur.



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**FIGURE 12-7:**  
Drawing spotted,  
short fur involves  
lots of shading  
and a full range  
of values.

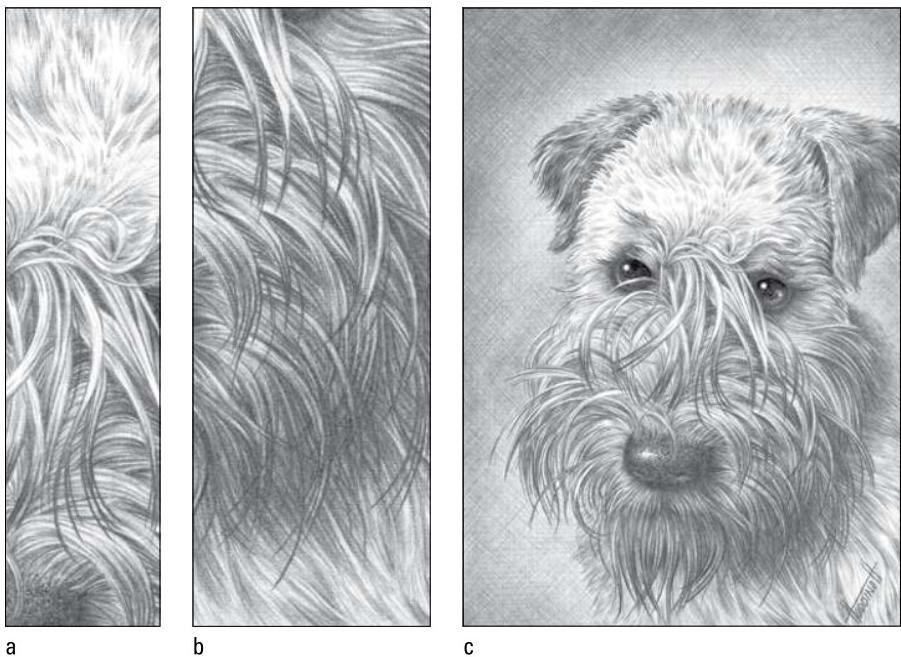
## Render long fur

Long fur presents different challenges than short fur because the individual strands of long fur often curve in different directions and overlap one another many times. To make long fur easier to draw, try to adopt the following mantra: Essence is more important than exactitude. Basically, what this means is that you can draw a good representation of what long fur looks and feels like without drawing every single strand.

To see this mantra in action, take a look at the close-ups of fur in Figures 12-8a and 12-8b. Notice that you don't see individual hairs. Instead, you see curving strands of fur. In each strand or group of strands, you can see a light, curving fur

strip that tapers into a darker end. Imagine using your pencil to build the mass of long, curving marks you see in Figure 12–8c. Pay attention to the direction the fur grows and try to replicate that direction with your pencil strokes. Then imagine using your vinyl eraser to draw highlights on the mass of furry value you just drew. Can you see the fur emerge from your pencil and eraser marks? To finish the drawing, imagine going back in with your pencil and darkening the shadows underneath and between the strands of fur you made.

Long fur doesn't define the bone structure of an animal as well as short fur does. However, if you spend some time observing the animal, you can actually tell a lot about the underlying form by looking at what the fur does. In Figure 12–8c, the way the fur lays tells you about the shape of the dog's snout. The rounded forms of the snout push against the fur, causing the fur to flop around and down toward the chin. The contrasting light and shadow on the fur tell you the snout comes forward, and the patch of light above the nose tells your eyes that overhead light is falling on the snout. At the same time, the shadowy fur to the left and right of the nose tells you that the sides of the snout have turned down and away from the light.



**FIGURE 12-8:**  
Drawing long,  
soft fur on an  
animal.

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## Using fur to reveal underlying form

You can make a drawing in which the fur works with the structure of the animal to reveal its underlying form as long as you pay attention to the direction the fur grows and the way light plays across it.



SKETCHBOOK

The following steps walk you through the process of drawing a longhaired Scottish Highland cow. Before you get started, grab your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and vinyl eraser. For this exercise, you can either copy along with the drawing shown here or search the Internet for an image of a Scottish Highland cow and use these instructions to make a drawing of the image you find.

- 1. Using your HB pencil, lightly draw the simple shapes that make up the cow's body (see Figure 12-9a).**

Although the Scottish Highland cow is draped in long, coarse fur, you can guess its underlying shapes by concentrating on some of the landmarks on the body. For example, cow's head takes its shape from the skull, while the back of the cow looks like it does because of the long spine running along its back that ends in rounded square hips formed by the cow's pelvis.

- 2. Use your HB pencil to draw a more precise contour drawing; then use your kneaded eraser to lighten the lines.**
- 3. Use your HB pencil to begin lightly drawing the cow's fur; use curved hatching lines to represent the long, wavy fur (see Figure 12-9b).**



TIP

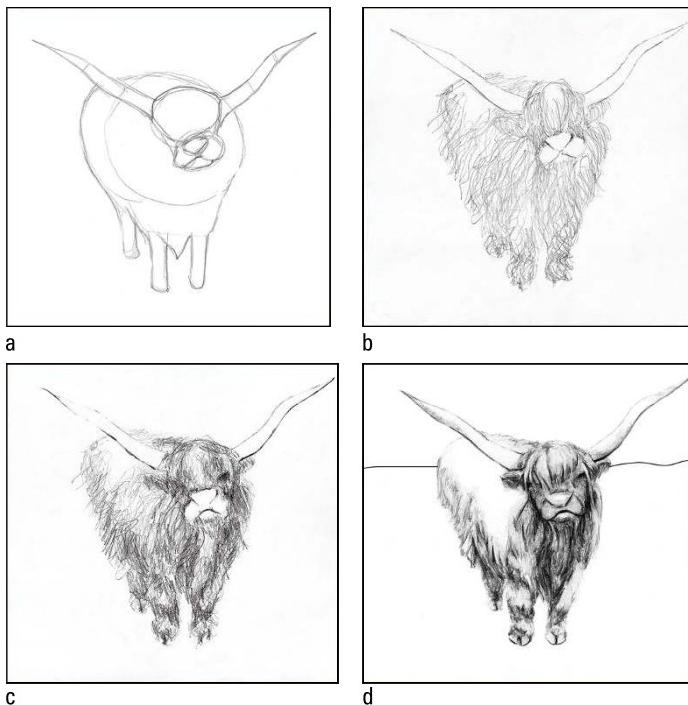
Pay attention to the direction in which the fur grows and turn to Chapter 8 for details on drawing hatching lines.

- 4. Use your 2B pencil to darken the fur where it needs to be darker (see Figure 12-9c).**
- 5. Use your vinyl eraser to lighten the fur where it is catching light.**
- 6. Use your 4B pencil to add dark lines at places where you see dark separations between sections of the fur and anywhere else you need dark shadows in your drawing (see Figure 12-9d).**

Some of these dark separations occur where sections of fur overlap.

## Drawing wings and feathers

Wings come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. Some wings are designed to expand and contract like an accordion while others are quite flat and simply flap open and closed. To draw an accurate representation of a wing, you have to get the structure right first; then you can move on to creating the texture.



**FIGURE 12-9:**  
Using fur to  
depict the  
underlying  
structure of an  
animal.

*Jamie Combs*



SKETCHBOOK

To practice drawing the structure of realistic wings, grab your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and vinyl eraser. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Find a photo of a bird (or just a wing) online or in a nature book; look at the bird's wing, focusing on the simple shapes that make it up.**
- 2. Use your HB pencil to draw the basic shapes of the wing.**

Figure 12-10a shows an example of a basic shape drawing of a wing. Turn to Chapter 6 for more details on breaking objects down into their simple shapes.

- 3. Use your HB pencil to lightly apply shading to the parts of the wing that appear to be in shadow.**

Make sure your marks follow along the direction of the feathery fibers.

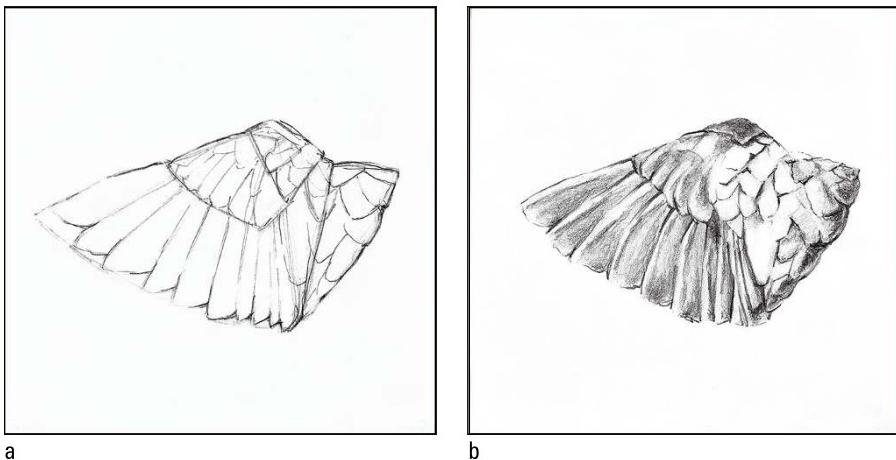


TIP

You can use a combination of curved hatching lines (to help larger feathers look realistic) and graduated tone (to illustrate tiny feathers). Read about these techniques in Chapter 8; I show you how to use them to make textures in Chapter 9.

- 4. Use your eraser to “draw” light on any parts of the wing that need to be lighter.**

**FIGURE 12-10:**  
Drawing wings  
using basic  
shapes and  
simple shading  
techniques.



Jamie Combs

5. Use your 2B pencil to darken areas that need to be darker.
6. Use your 4B pencil to add the small amounts of darkest dark value beneath and between areas of the wing that need it.

This will help the drawing really snap into focus (see Figure 12-10b).

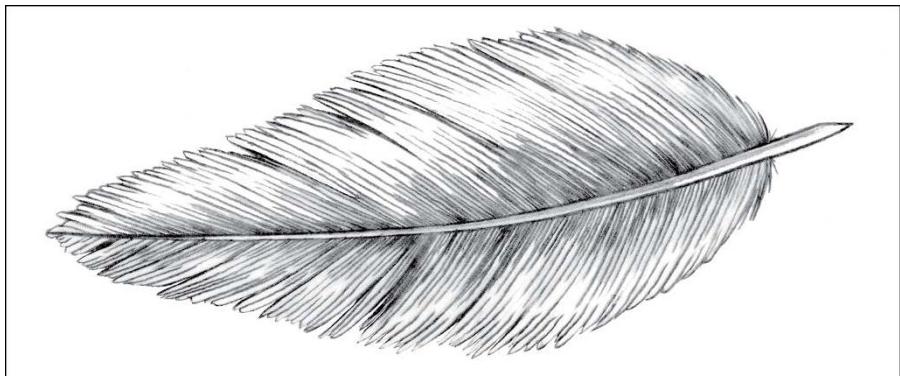
To draw the many feathers of a wing with accuracy, you need to understand an individual feather's basic shape and construction. Take a look at the drawing of a feather in Figure 12-11 and focus on the following:

- » The fibers of the feather radiate out from the *shaft* (the long, skinny thing in the center).
- » Clumps of feather fibers attach to the shaft; the artist used extra-dark values to represent these attachments. Use a soft pencil and a little extra pressure to create spots of extra darkness at the points of attachment. This will make the fibers of your feather appear to grow naturally from the shaft.
- » The darkest lines between the feather fibers happen in the gaps between clumps of fibers. To make your feather look more natural, think about drawing the fibers in clumps rather than drawing each individual fiber.
- » The highlight on the feather is uneven because highlights happen when a particular surface is strongly illuminated by light. Because the surface of this feather (like the surface of lots of objects) is lumpy and bumpy, it makes sense that the light would hit it unevenly.

Watch out for uneven patches of light. If what you see contradicts your rational mind, trust your eyes. They know more about drawing.



REMEMBER



**FIGURE 12-11:**  
Taking a close-up look at a feather.

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## Capturing Life in Animal Portraits

Creating a portrait of an animal goes beyond simply depicting its basic shapes and textures. A portrait tells you something about an animal's mysterious inner being as well as the external facts of its appearance. Some animal portraits also include the habitat in which the animal lives. The gesture (posture) of an animal gives away a great deal about that animal's emotional state. At a glance, you can probably tell whether an animal is calm, happy, frightened, bored, dangerous, and so on.

Sometimes animals use body language to send a message. Think back to a time when you saw two or more animals engage each other in nonverbal communication. Perhaps your pet cat intimidated your new dog with a stare. Or maybe you remember seeing a nature documentary in which a young lion made a play gesture, inviting a littermate to spar. Animals strike meaningful poses to make their intentions clear to other animals.

To represent the true character of an animal as expressed by its body language, you can start by making a gesture drawing. A *gesture drawing* is a quick sketch that summarizes a body's basic pose. In the following set of illustrations, the gesture drawing tells you the general direction of the cat's upper and lower body, the relationship between the body and head, and the angles traced by the cat's tail. For a lot more about gesture drawing, see Chapter 6.



The following steps walk you through the process of making a lifelike drawing of an animal. Although the animal shown in the corresponding figures in this section is a cat, you can use these instructions to draw any animal.

Before you get started, be sure to take a photograph of the animal you want to draw so that you have something to use to finish the drawing after the animal inevitably moves. (The photograph will be especially useful in Steps 4 through 7.) For this exercise, grab your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and vinyl and kneaded erasers.

**1. Use your HB pencil to make a gesture drawing of the animal you're drawing.**

Draw a circle for the head and a line that runs like an imaginary axis through the animal's body (see Figure 12-12a). Quickly summarize the simple shapes of the animal's torso. Draw a line that runs through the imaginary axis of the tail and any limbs you see (see Figure 12-12b). Use lines to help make sure the parts of the body are in the right places relative to each other.

To do this, set your pencil down on part of the body that juts out (like the end of a foot). Keep it there. Choose another part of the body that juts out, like the end of the other foot. With your pencil on the paper, look at the corresponding point on the animal. Don't look down at the paper. Move your eyes from one foot to the other foot. While your eyes are moving, move your arm to move the pencil. Trace the line your eyes make as they move. (See Figure 12-12.) You can do this to check the relationships between any part of the body and any other part. Notice all the lines in Figure 12-12c that connect one part to another. This is how those lines were made. The more you do this, the more certain you can be about where things are in relation to each other.

**2. After you've established the underlying structure of the body, begin to build the fleshy parts using simple shapes.**

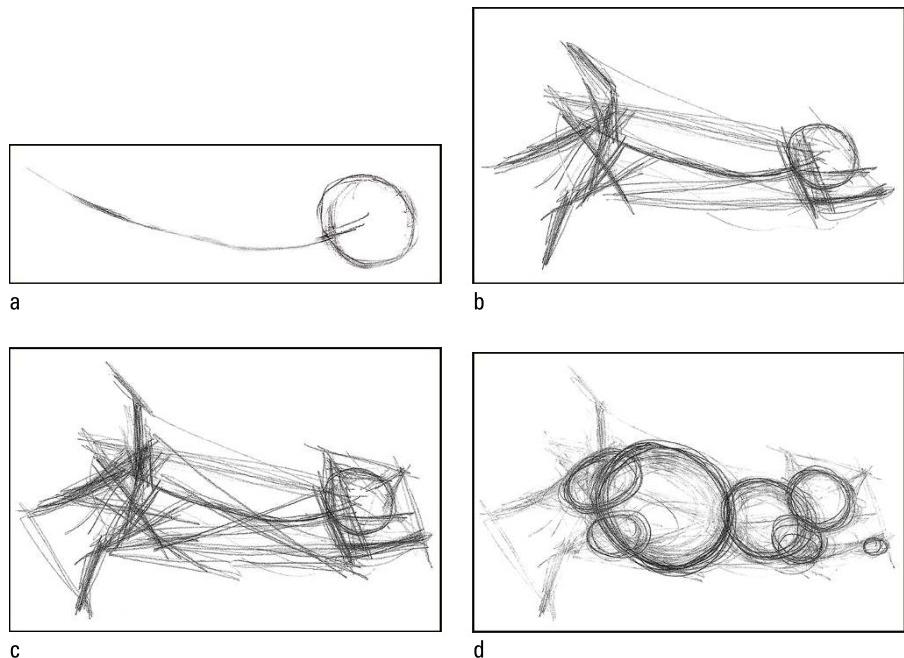
Circles work well for the forms on most animal bodies (see Figure 12-12d). It is a good practice to keep your eyes on the subject, and not the paper, as you draw and imagine that you're wrapping lines around the rounded sections of the animal's body.

**3. Use your HB pencil to connect and smooth out the contours implied by the relationships between simple shapes of the animal's body (see Figure 12-13).**

Be sure to keep the lines light so that you can easily erase them later. While you draw, try to forget about the paper and instead, imagine your pencil is actually tracing the animal's contours. You can look at the drawing to make sure that your pencil is in the right spot, but, other than that quick peek, continue to look at your subject and "feel" your pencil on the subject.

4. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten the lines of the drawing (refer to Figure 12-13).
5. Use your 2B pencil to add texture by lightly shading the fur. Account for any shadows on the animal's body by layering extra shading into the shadow areas (see Figure 12-14a).

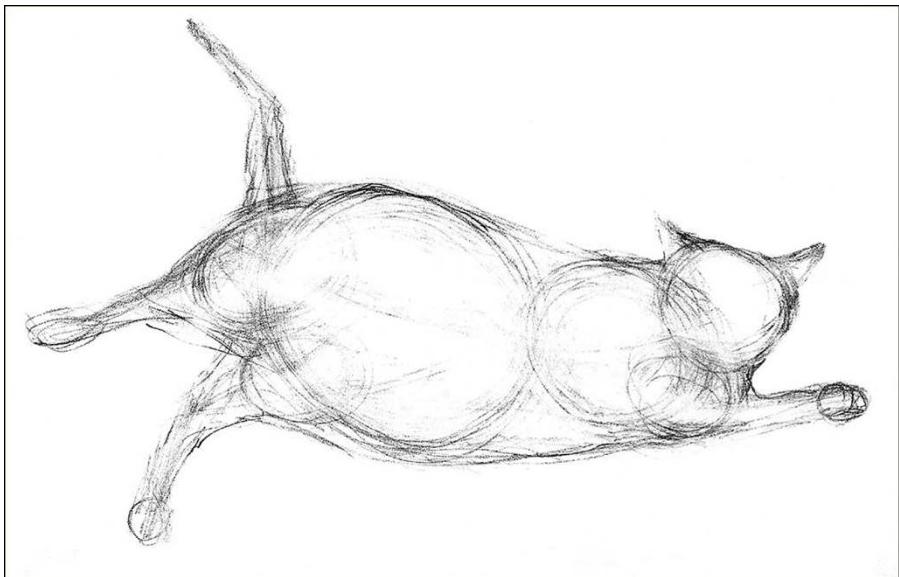
Hatching is a great shading technique for shading furry animals because it allows you to build value and texture at the same time. Just be sure to shade in the direction that the fur grows (see Chapter 8 for more details on shading and the earlier section "Identifying the long and short of fur" for more details on rendering fur).



**FIGURE 12-12:**  
Drawing the basic  
gesture of a  
house cat.

Jamie Combs

6. Use your 2B pencil to build as many layers as you need to represent the darker values where you see them on the animal's body (see Figure 12-14b).



**FIGURE 12-13:**  
Using your pencil  
and eraser to  
smooth out the  
cat's form.

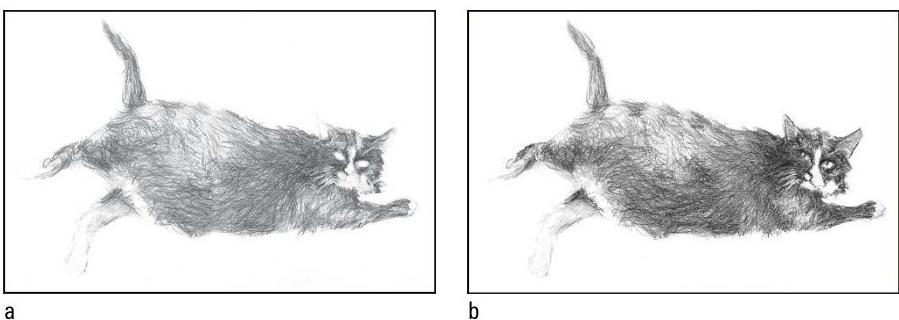
*Jamie Combs*

7. Look closely at your drawing to see how the values compare to the actual animal; use your eraser and 2B pencil to make any necessary changes.
8. Switch to your 4B pencil and draw the darkest values on the animal's body (see Figure 12-15).



TIP

Look for the darkest values wherever parts of the animal's body or strands of fur press together or overlap.



**FIGURE 12-14:**  
Building the  
appearance of  
texture through  
shading.

*Jamie Combs*



**FIGURE 12-15:**  
Add the darkest  
values to  
complete the  
drawing.

*Jamie Combs*

## Project: Wings on the Water

This project shows you how to combine different source material to create a realistic animal portrait. Although the drawings in this particular project represent flamingos, you can follow these steps for any bird you want to draw.

Because most birds are constantly moving unless they're sleeping, you more or less have to take a few photographs of them in your yard or at the local zoo to draw them accurately. Wherever you find your drawing subject, take a few photos and make a couple of gesture drawings of the bird to learn about the movements it makes. You can then combine the information you get from your gesture drawings and photographs to create a drawing that has a sense of movement and volume as well as a realistic depiction of the bird's texture.

After you photograph and draw the gesture of your drawing subject, you need to do a little preparatory work to get your composition ready. For instance:

- » You need to decide whether you'll draw your subject from a distance or close up and whether you'll have a single point of focus or several focal points within the composition.
- » You can also plan a path for the viewer's eyes to follow through your drawing space.

The artist of the drawings in this project wanted to include several flamingos in their natural habitat, so they chose to set the flamingos at a distance. Because they wanted to make each of the flamingos a point of focus, they spaced them evenly across the drawing. To create a path through the drawing, they used the bodies of the flamingos to create an imaginary line that leads the viewer's eyes across the drawing from the left. (See Chapter 5 for details on how to do all these preparatory tasks.)



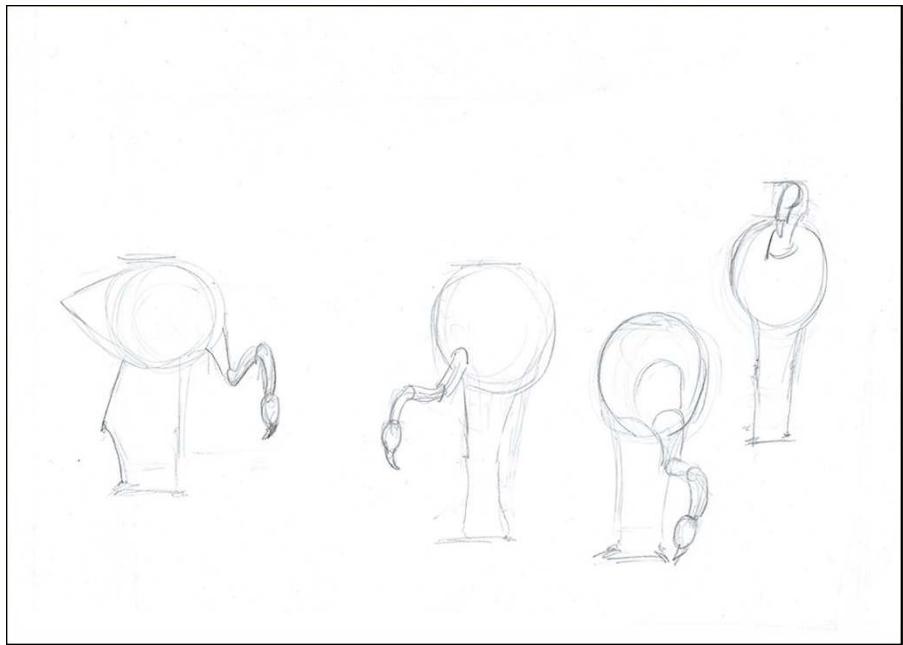
When you have your gesture drawings, photographs, and a composition plan for this project in order, grab your sketchbook, HB, 2B, and 4B pencils, and kneaded and vinyl erasers and follow these steps:

- 1. Draw a rectangle in your sketchbook to mark out your drawing space.**  
Make the rectangle equal or proportionately equivalent to the dimensions of the photograph you're using for your drawing.
- 2. Make a light mark in your drawing space to indicate the top of the highest object in your composition (in the example, it is the head of the flamingo on the far right).**
- 3. Make a light mark in your drawing space to indicate where the lowest part of your subject will be.**
- 4. Use the photograph to make a quick gesture drawing of the subject that fits between the marks you made in Steps 2 and 3.**
- 5. Draw the simple shapes of your subject (see Figure 12-16).**
- 6. Add information from the photograph to your drawing to fill out the composition (see Figure 12-17).**

Don't feel like you have to include everything from the photograph. Focus on drawing the simple shapes that make up the main elements in the background of the photo; see Chapter 5 for more details on composition.

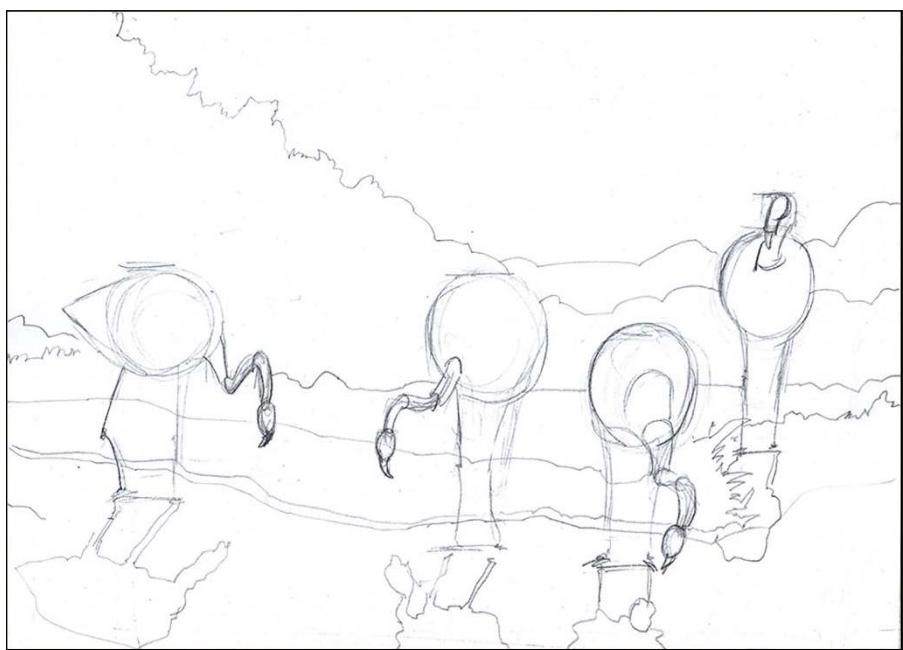
- 7. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten all the lines you've made so far.**
- 8. Use your HB pencil to draw more detailed contour lines around all the elements in your drawing, making a line drawing of your composition (see Figure 12-18).**
- 9. Use your 2B pencil to lightly shade the whole drawing (see Figure 12-19).**

See Chapter 8 for details on the different shading techniques you can use for this step.



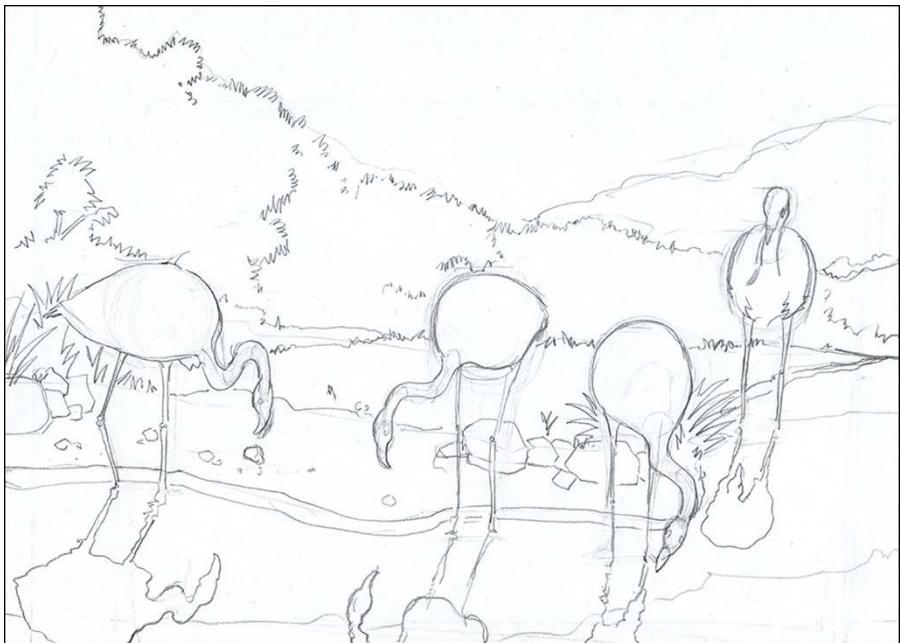
**FIGURE 12-16:**  
Drawing the  
simple shapes  
that make up  
your drawing  
subject.

Kensuke Okabayashi



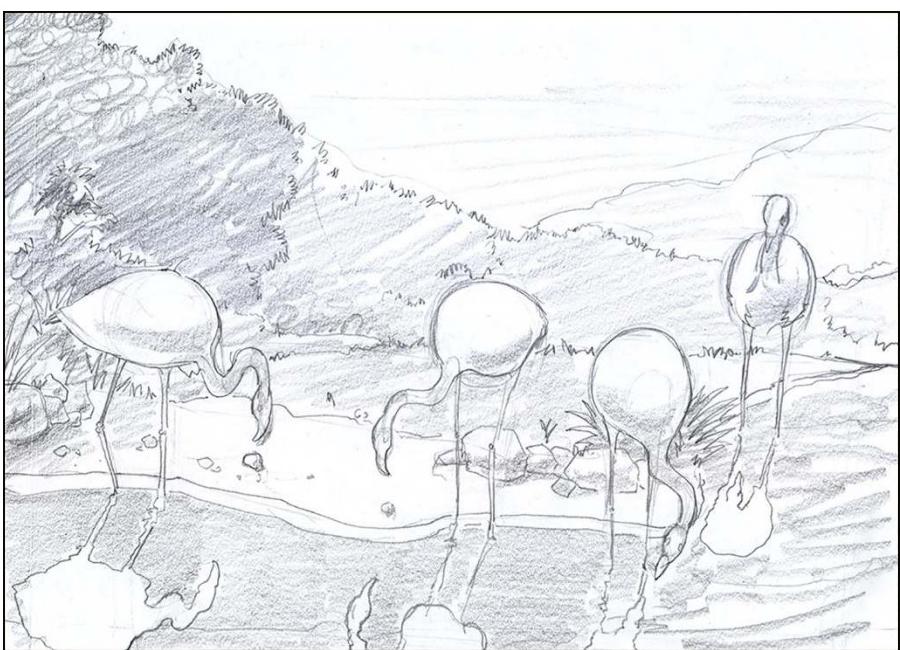
**FIGURE 12-17:**  
Fleshying out your  
drawing's  
composition.

Kensuke Okabayashi



**FIGURE 12-18:**  
Cleaning up your  
drawing.

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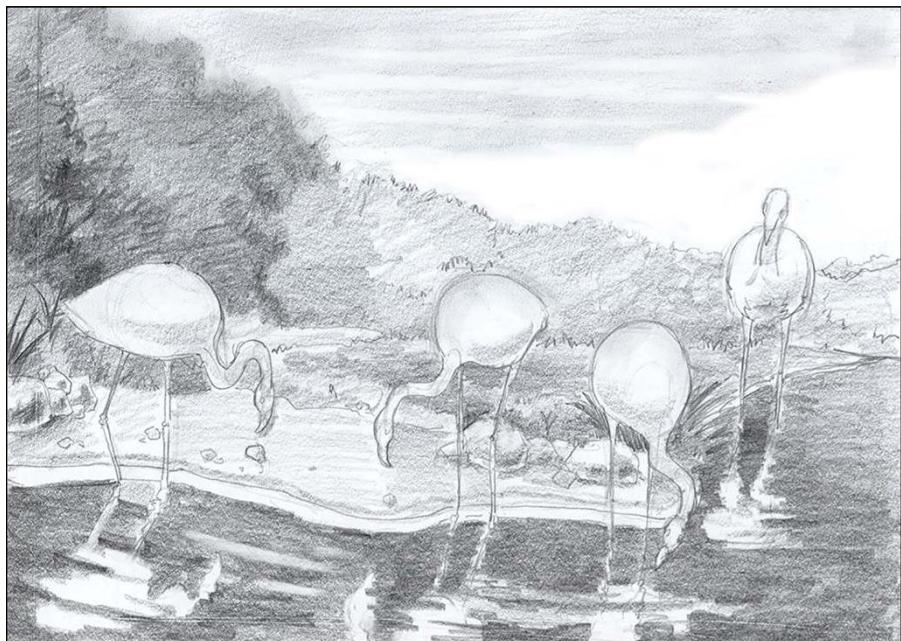


**FIGURE 12-19:**  
Shading your  
drawing.

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**10.** Apply additional layers of shading where needed to render the textures and values in your drawing (see Figure 12-20).

Be sure to increase the darkness of your shading where you need the values to be darker.



**FIGURE 12-20:**  
Adding darker  
layers to your  
drawing.

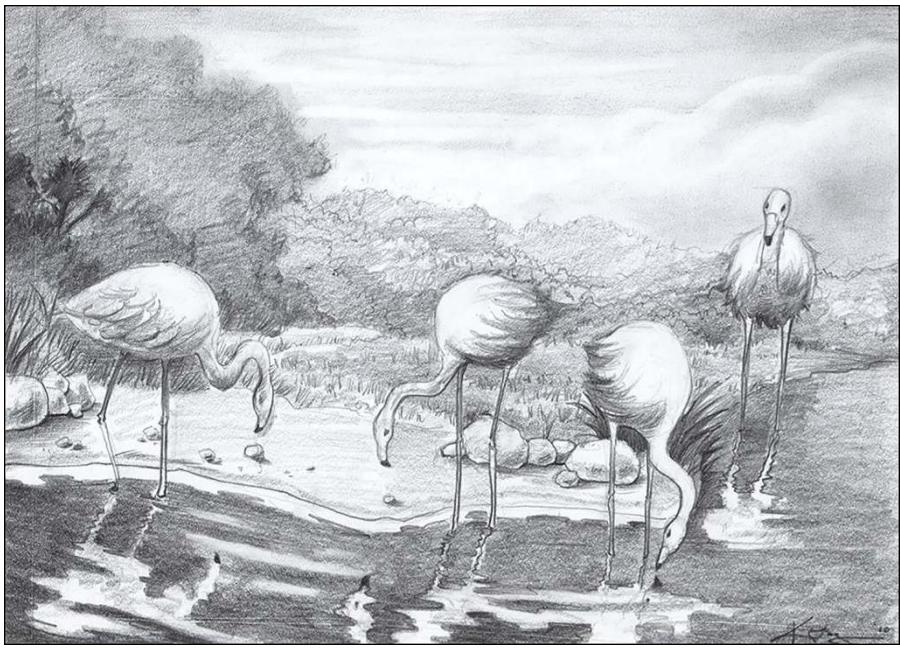
*Kensuke Okabayashi*

**11.** Compare the values in your drawing to the values in your photograph and make any adjustments necessary to lighten or darken the values in your drawing.

**12.** Switch to your 4B pencil and add the darkest values to your drawing (see Figure 12-21).

Look at the spaces beneath the wings and underneath the birds' beaks; these are the darkest values of all because they are blocked off from the light. Even if these areas are rather small, they're very important to the overall impact of your drawing.

**FIGURE 12-21:**  
Adding the  
finishing touches  
to your drawing.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Considering proportion, gesture, and simple shapes when drawing the body
- » Focusing on the face and head
- » Capturing groups of distant figures and figures in motion on paper
- » Putting your people skills to the test with a figure-drawing project

## Chapter 13

# Drawing People

The human figure is arguably the most revered drawing subject of all, not to mention one of the most intimidating! Mentally, the process of drawing people realistically can seem like the work of magician-like artists. In practice, however, drawing people isn't that different from drawing coffee cups or tadpoles — you start by getting an overall sense of shape and position and then work in stages toward greater specificity.

This chapter walks you through the basics of drawing people. I begin by showing you how to draw the basic shapes and features of the human body and then move on to the face-specific features like the nose, eyes, mouth, ears, and hair. As an added bonus, I cover the basics of drawing people in the distance and people in motion. Then I help you test your figure drawing skills with a simple project.



TIP

If you love the idea of drawing people and want a more in-depth exploration, check out *Figure Drawing For Dummies* by Kensuke Okabayashi (Wiley).

## Drawing the Body

At first glance, you likely see the human body as a complex drawing subject, but when you look a little closer, you can see that it's actually made up of simple shapes and volumes that make it just as manageable to draw as most other

subjects. The secret to drawing people well is looking past the details and focusing on the simple forms that make up the body.

In the following sections, I walk you through the process of drawing a body. I help you get a basic idea of the underlying structures of the body — in other words, the bones and muscles — and I show you a proportional system that comes in handy when you're trying to decide how big to make the head, arms, legs, and so on. I also show you how to move through a simple order of operations for every figure drawing you make:

- » Start with a gesture drawing
- » Use simple shapes to build the parts of the body on top of your gesture drawing
- » Use contour lines to complete your figure drawing.

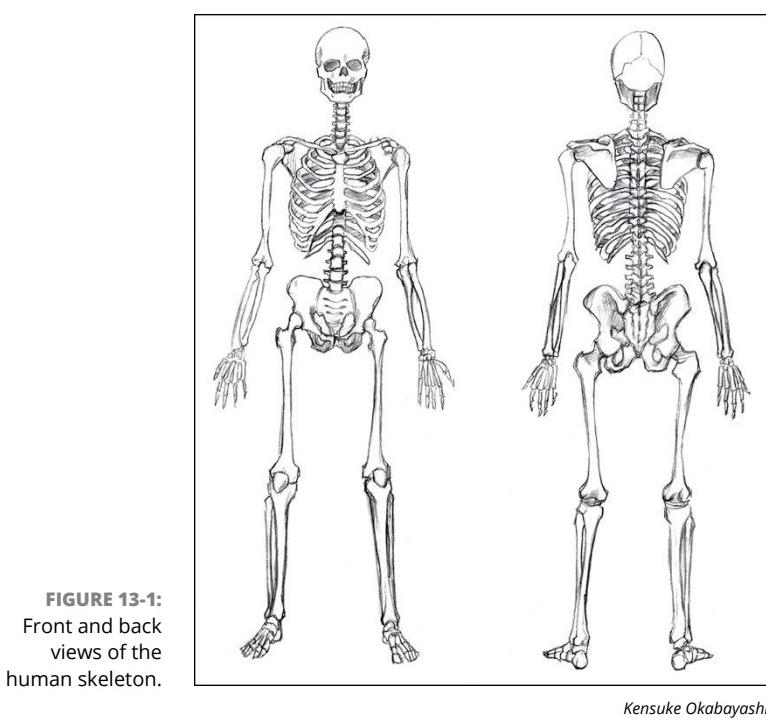
## Examining superficial human anatomy

*“The head bone’s connected to the neck bone, the neck bone’s connected to the back bone . . .”*

Remember that song from way back when? Well, by now, you know the “head bone” is actually called the skull, but for drawing, it doesn’t really matter because you don’t have to memorize the correct names of all the body’s parts to be able to draw a body well. However, because many of the bones and muscles of the body are superficial — meaning you can detect them beneath the skin — it does help to know what’s going on under the surface if you want to draw figures convincingly.

Take a look at both views of the skeleton in Figure 13-1. The center of the body is the spinal column. The spinal column connects to the base of the skull, runs along the back of the ribcage, and then curves forward slightly and back again (creating the curvature of the lower back) to connect with the back of the pelvis. The limbs of the body are extensions attached to the center of the body.

Now look at the front and back views of the superficial muscles in Figure 13-2. The body’s muscles attach to and wrap around the bones. Groups of muscles exert tension in opposing directions to hold everything in place and keep the body upright. Individual muscles contract and extend to facilitate movement of the bones. When a group of muscles wraps around a particular bone, it creates a bulge that gives shape to that part of the body. For an example, compare the head and upper torso in Figure 13-1 to the head and upper torso in Figure 13-2. Notice that the muscles in Figure 13-2 have a lot to do with the characteristic shapes you see on those parts of the body.



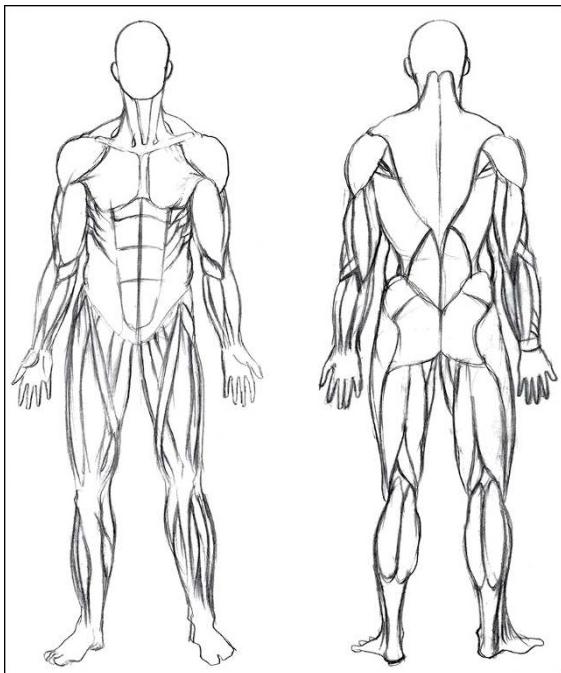
**FIGURE 13-1:**  
Front and back  
views of the  
human skeleton.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

Being able to identify the basic shapes of the bones and muscles in the body not only helps you understand how the body moves and where the lumps, bumps, and depressions in the body come from but also helps you see them more clearly as you draw. For example, take a look at Figure 13-2. Having a basic idea of what the neck looks like beneath the skin makes it easier to identify the real shape of the neck, which makes the neck easier to draw.

## Measuring proportion

Regardless of the actual height of a person, a popular conception holds, which is that the human body is generally eight heads tall (see Figure 13-3 for a visual representation). You'll certainly find exceptions to this rule. However, you can use this proportional system as a starting point and as a troubleshooting device as you start drawing people. There will be times when the foreshortening of parts of the body mean the eight-heads proportional system won't work perfectly. (See the later section "Building the body from simple shapes" for a definition of foreshortening.)



**FIGURE 13-2:**  
Front and back  
views of the  
superficial  
muscles.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*



TIP

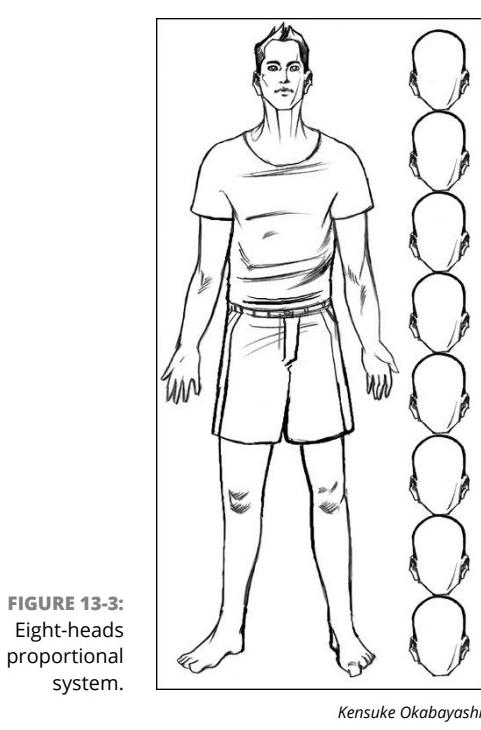
The most important thing to know about the eight-head's proportional system, or any other one, is that it provides a model for creating coherent proportions in your by establishing a unit of measure you can use. In a "head-based" based proportional system, you can use the height of the head as a unit of measure to check the proportions of the rest of your drawing.

The height of the head won't always work. For example, if the figure is doing something that obscures part of the head (or if the head is very foreshortened), you can't see the height of the head and it simply won't work as a unit of measure. It's okay, though, because what's important is that you choose a single unit of measure to compare everything against and not what you choose as your unit of measure. Choose any segment of the body that is not foreshortened that you can easily see and measure. (For more on choosing and using a unit of measure to check the proportions in your drawing, turn to Chapter 6.)



REMEMBER

When you choose a unit of measure to use to check the proportions in your drawing, you can use that same unit to measure anything in the drawing no matter how big or small it is. For example, you can compare the height of a head to the length of the thigh, as I do in the section "Building the body from simple shapes," or the width of the torso (or any other part of the drawing).



**FIGURE 13-3:**  
Eight-heads  
proportional  
system.

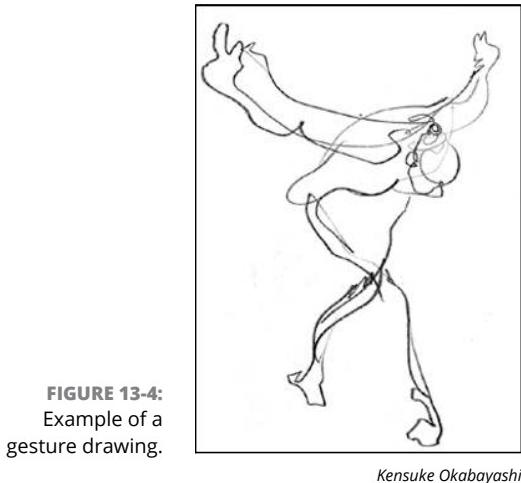
*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Capturing gesture

The *gesture* of a figure is its general position in space. Perhaps a figure is sitting straight up with legs out to the left and bent. This particular position is the gesture of that figure. To capture the gesture of a figure in drawing, you must forget about getting it “right” and focus on feeling your way through the drawing. Gesture drawing is exploratory drawing. You’re making a map of where things are and how they sit, stand, and lie. The point is to re-create the essence of the pose on your paper. Look intently at the figure and, keeping your eyes on the subject the entire time, draw lines through the major axes of the body. Draw lightly and rapidly and keep your drawing tool in contact with the paper as much as you can.

Vary the length of your gesture drawings between one minute and five minutes each. Set a timer so you don’t have to think about the time while you draw. Regardless of how much time you have, work to maintain a steady, rapid pace. This will keep you from getting bogged down in the details that keep you from seeing the big relationships between spine, head, ribcage, pelvis, and limbs, which are the heart of gesture drawing. When you are working with a longer timeframe, you can spend time double-checking and expanding on your explorations between one form and another.

Figure 13-4 shows an example of a gesture drawing. Notice that the artist didn't try to capture any real details of the figure (or anything else in the scene) in the gesture drawing; he simply tried to represent the figure's basic position in space. After you finish your gesture drawing, you can use it as a foundation for the rest of your drawing. Keep in mind, though, that you'll most likely erase the lines of your gesture drawing later anyway, so don't stress over making it perfect. (For more on gesture drawing, see Chapters 6 and 12.)



**FIGURE 13-4:**  
Example of a  
gesture drawing.

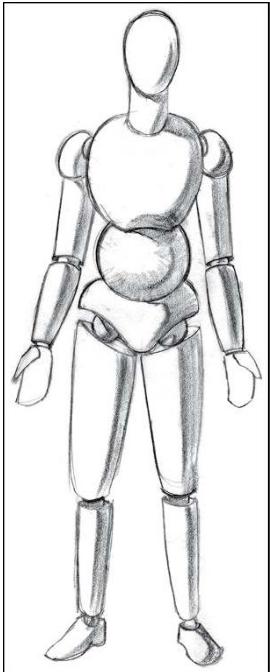
*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Building the body from simple shapes

After you establish the gesture of a figure, you can begin to build the volumes of its body by reducing them to simple shapes (see Figure 13-5 for an example of what I mean). In the figure, the head is an egg-like shape that's rounder at the back of the skull and narrower near the chin.

As you break the body into simple shapes, don't forget to consider the proportions of those shapes. To help you get the sizes right for all your body parts, first determine what size you're going to make the head in your drawing. Then use the dimension of the head to determine the sizes of other parts by comparison. For example, if the head you draw is 1 inch tall, the upper leg will be 2 inches tall because it's the equivalent of 2 heads high (see the earlier section "Measuring proportion" for more details).

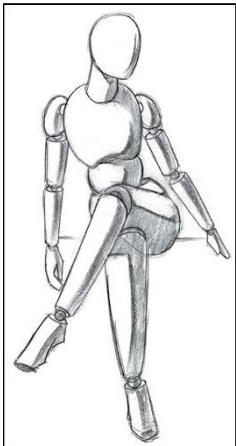
When parts of the body are turned toward you (as it is in Figure 13-6), you need to take foreshortening into account to see the simple shapes. (*Foreshortening* is basically the illusion that the length of an object — like your figure's leg — appears to shrink as the object is pointed straighter at you; see the section on perspective in Chapter 7 for more details.)



**FIGURE 13-5:**  
Simplifying the  
body into its basic  
shapes.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

The first thing you need to do when drawing the shape of a foreshortened object is to imagine what it would look flat. For example, if you're trying to draw the thigh of a bent leg, imagine that you're looking at it behind a piece of glass and use your imaginary pencil to trace the outer edge of the upper leg. When you have an idea of the shape, draw that shape where it should go on your paper. Next, check the proportions of the shape to make sure they're right.



**FIGURE 13-6:**  
Simplifying the  
seated body into  
its basic shapes.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

Since the light of the bent leg is going back in space, you are seeing a foreshortened view of the thigh. Foreshortening makes it impossible to use the eight-heads proportional system to measure the actual length of the thigh. Don't worry, though, you can still use the head as a unit of measure to determine the height and width of what you can see. Simply compare the height of the head to the height of the simple shape of the thigh and then you'll know how tall to make the simple shape of the thigh in your drawing.

For example, if the shape of the thigh you're measuring is half the height of the head, the drawn object should be half the height of the drawn head. (See Chapter 7 for even more information about using a unit of measure to check proportions.) You can do the same to figure out how wide to make the simple shape of the thigh.



TIP

If you have a hard time seeing the simple shape of a foreshortened form on your figure, close one eye. Doing so eliminates the double-vision that often occurs when both eyes try to focus on something foreshortened. To see how closing one eye improves your ability to see something foreshortened, point a finger directly at your nose; then close one eye. Notice how much better you can see it with one eye closed.

## Using contour lines to refine your drawing

Once you've established the gesture of a figure you're drawing, broken the figure down into simple shapes, and checked the proportions in your drawing, you can use *contour lines* (lines that describe the exterior and interior edges of your subject) to refine the drawing and make it look like a real person. You may choose to clean up some or all of the *construction lines* you used to construct the drawing so far. Simply use your kneaded eraser to lighten the lines of the shapes and then begin to draw lines where you need them to build more realistic contours on top of the lightened shapes. Figure 13-7 shows what Figure 13-6 looked like after the artist lightened the basic shapes and added contour lines (see the next section for details on how to add hair and facial features to your figure).



TIP

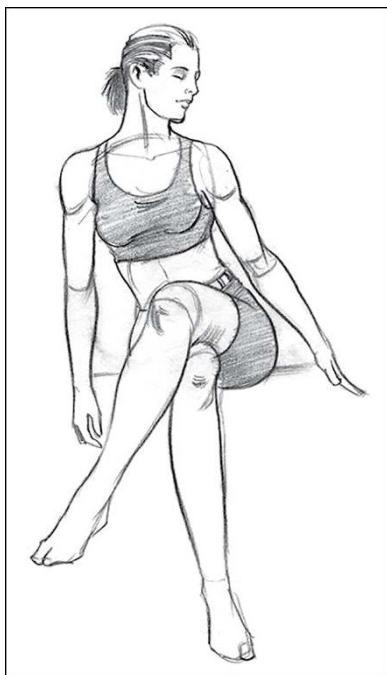
Start drawing your contour lines with a medium pencil like an HB or 2B so that you can erase any mistakes you make fairly easily. When you finish drawing the contour lines, you can use a softer pencil, like a 4B, to retrace any of the lines that could use heavier *line weight*. (For more information on line weight, see Chapter 6.)



REMEMBER

As you add your contour lines to your drawing, don't confuse them with simple outlines (lines that depict the edges of flat shapes). Outlines are the same weight, or thickness, throughout the drawing (think about the objects in children's coloring books). Contour lines, on the other hand, are lines that sensitively depict the exterior and interior edges of a form that has volume. The weight (heaviness or

lightness) of contour lines varies a lot within a single form to show the way light strikes a three-dimensional form differently in different spots. Artists use contour lines (not outlines) to render realistic line drawings of people. When you're drawing a darker area on a figure (like the line between two things that are pressed together), use a heavier (thicker and/or darker) line; when you're drawing a lighter area (like the curve of a shoulder that's catching light), use a lighter (thinner) line. (See Chapter 6 for more info on contour drawing and varying your line weight.)



**FIGURE 13-7:**  
Using contour  
lines to refine the  
drawing in  
Figure 13-6.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Picking Up Portraiture

When it comes to portraiture, the main difficulty is that most people think it's all about the face. Beginning artists often forget about the head or think they can draw the shape of the head after they draw the rest of the facial features, but, unfortunately, working in this order almost never results in a realistic portrayal of the drawing subject. The eyes end up too far apart or too close together, while the nose ends up a little too long or a little too short, or just in the wrong place. On the other hand, if you draw the head first, you have a much better chance of getting all the facial features right because you have a defined space in which to put them.

The following sections show you how to draw the head first and then how to place and draw the rest of the facial features with respect to the head's position and size.

## Measuring proportions for the head and face

When you're drawing the head and face of your figure, it's a good idea to start with a few basic proportions. For example, on most human faces, the eyes are actually found halfway between the chin and the crown, or the highest visible part of the head. In portraits drawn by beginners, the eyes are almost always too high. This is understandable if you remember that most people think of the top of the face (forehead) as the top of the head. After all, the face is the part we all pay attention to!



REMEMBER

Whenever you begin a portrait, begin by drawing the shape of the head. Then locate the position of the facial features by subdividing the head according to these basic proportions (see Figure 13-8 for a visual guide):

- » Draw a line halfway down the head for the eyes.
- » Draw a line one-third of the way down the head for the browline.
- » Draw a line two-thirds of the way down the head for the root of the nose.
- » Draw a line one-third of the distance between the root of the nose and the chin for the line of the lips.
- » Draw marks for the ears on the side of the head between the lines for the brow and the root of the nose.

**Note:** The top of the head is the highest point you can see and may be pretty far back.

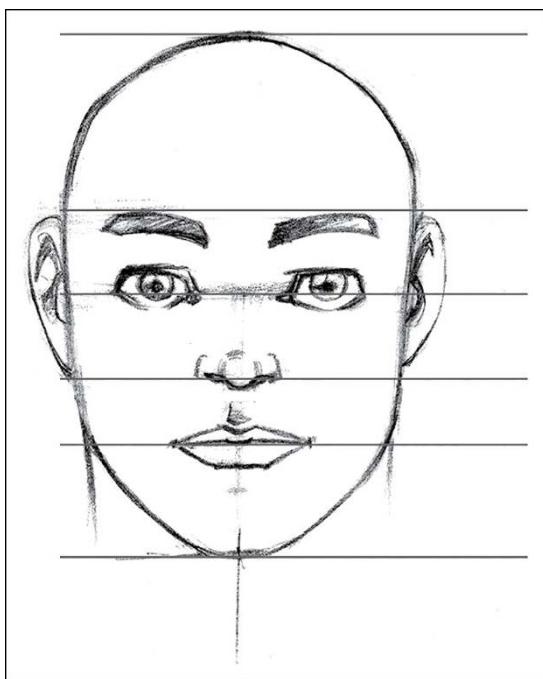


TIP

To check the position of your own eyes on your head, grab a ruler and find a mirror. Hold the ruler vertically so that you can see it next to your head as you look in the mirror. Line the bottom of the ruler up with your chin and notice how many inches are between your chin and the midline of your eyes. Then line the bottom of the ruler up with the midline of your eyes and check to see how many inches are between that midline and the top of your head.

Keep in mind that the head is basically a rounded, egglike volume that is the fullest at the upper back and tapers to the chin. (The jaw breaks the egg shape at the point where the jaw and back of the skull meet, but drawing the head as an egglike shape is still a helpful, simple place to start.) The features (eyes, nose, mouth, and

so on) are fixed in place on and within the rounded volume of the head, so when the head turns or tilts, the features move with it. For example, the eyes are parallel to the brow. No matter how the head tilts, the eyes are always parallel to the brow — even though your brain is used to seeing eyes that are parallel to the ground.



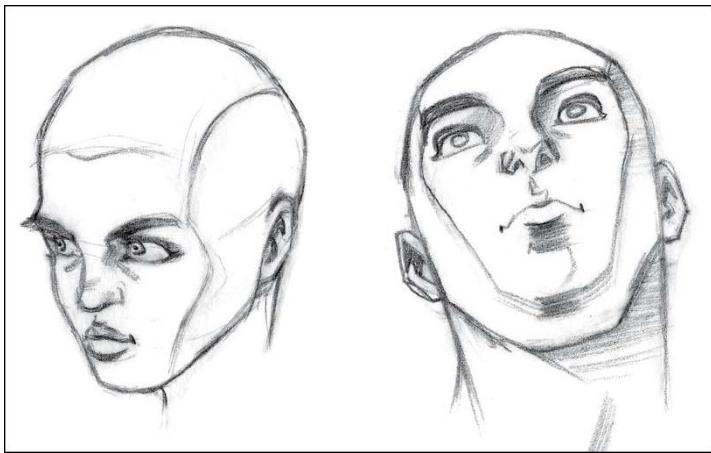
**FIGURE 13-8:**  
Marking  
the proportions  
of the head  
and face.

*Kensuke Okabayashi*

When you're drawing a head that's turned or tilted, make sure that you pay attention to what your eyes see and not what your brain thinks it knows about the face. For example, notice how the eyes on both faces in Figure 13-9 are parallel to their respective brows, not to the ground. Also, notice how much space the facial features actually occupy compared to the width and height of the turned and tilted heads in the figure.

Don't let your brain's expectations about the angle of facial features interfere with the angles you actually see; if you do, you may draw a tilted head with features that are sliding off the face because your brain believes the features must be horizontal. Likewise, because your brain is used to thinking of the portrait as a picture of a face, you may be tempted to place the features in the front of your drawing even when the head is turned away.

**FIGURE 13-9:**  
The appearance  
of the facial  
features changes  
along with the  
angle of the head.



*Kensuke Okabayashi*

## Drawing facial features

As a child, you probably learned to draw faces with symbolic features, like a big circle for the head, two dots or small circles for the eyes, and a wide *U* for the mouth (an upside-down *U* represented a frown). Although these symbolic features helped you visualize and represent different emotions as a child, they can get in the way as you practice drawing realistic portraits as an adult. To draw facial features successfully, focus your eyes on your subject, analyze what you see, and try to forget everything you once knew about drawing faces.

The next four sections give you a chance to practice accurately drawing a nose, an eye, a mouth, and a set of ears. The first time you move through the steps in each section, copy the examples in the exercise or find a photograph of a person facing front. Then find a mirror and use the steps to draw your own nose, eyes, mouth, and ears. For each exercise, you need your sketchbook, your 2H, 2B, and 4B pencils, and your kneaded eraser.

### The nose knows no bounds

Beginners often find the nose complicated to draw because when you look at the face straight on, you're seeing the nose in a foreshortened view (see the section on perspective in Chapter 7 for more on foreshortening). To draw the nose successfully, you must create the illusion that the nose is pointing out toward the viewer. The secret to creating this illusion lies in trusting your eyes rather than your expectations; doing so allows you to accurately record the shapes and values you see.



SKETCHBOOK

Follow these steps to draw two noses, one in profile and one facing front:

**1. Use your 2H pencil to draw the simple shapes of the nose in profile and the nose that faces front (see Figure 13-10a).**

Notice that in each case, the basic shape of the nose is a triangle. The bulk of the nose is a tent-like structure. A bony ridge runs down the top, flanked by two rectangular sides. At the end of the nose, you see a ball-like spherical shape that is more or less pronounced depending on the person you're drawing. To the left and right of the ball are smaller spherical shapes that contain the nostrils.

**2. Lighten the simple shape lines with your kneaded eraser and use your 2B pencil to draw contour lines on top of the lightened shapes (see Figure 13-10b).**

When drawing the front-facing nose, you may want to add light contour lines to indicate the sides of the bony ridge of the nose. Just make sure that you don't draw them too dark. As you draw these particular contour lines, be sure to keep your eyes trained on the subject while you draw. As soon as you look at the paper, you force yourself to draw from memory. This is hard to do because the subtle changes that define the curves of the nose are difficult to memorize. For this reason, it's much easier to draw any lines that vary in weight or direction while you're looking at the subject's nose. Simply choose a starting point on your paper, place your pencil there, and then move your pencil while looking at the nose. Try to forget about the paper and imagine you're actually drawing on the nose. Doing so takes patience, but it saves a lot of time in the end.

**3. Use your 2B pencil to draw the nostrils of each nose (see Figure 13-10c).**

As you draw the nostrils, focus on what they actually look like on your subject. In other words, try not to let your mind's perception of nostrils as dots or circles influence your drawing. Although nostrils are openings, they aren't perfectly round like circles; instead, they're shaped more like kidney beans.

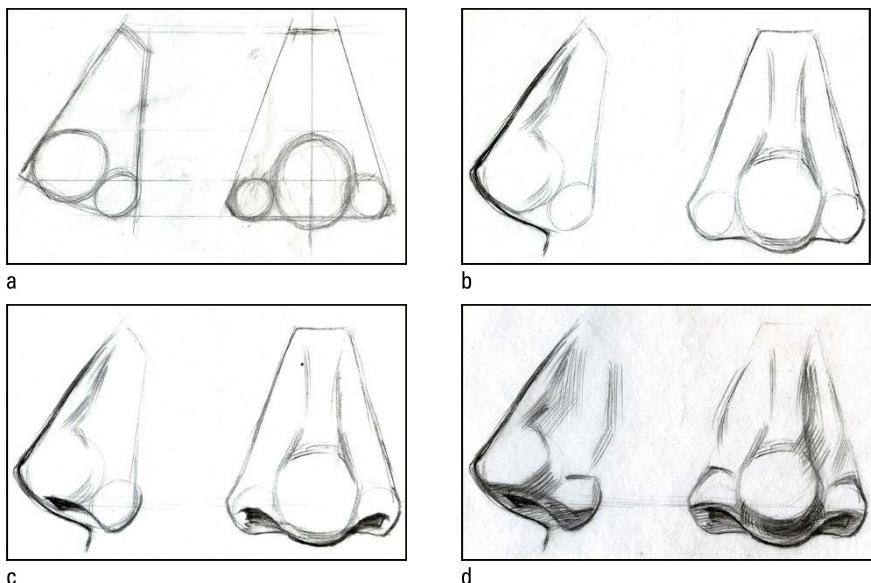
**4. Use your kneaded eraser to clean up any stray lines and your 4B pencil to add emphasis to lines that need extra weight (see Figure 13-10d).**

See Chapter 6 for a discussion of line weight.

## The eyes have it

The eyes are made up of eyelids and eyeballs. The eyeballs sit inside the skull's ocular cavities (the openings between the brow and the cheekbone). The eyelids (each eye has an upper and a lower one) stretch like awnings around the spherical eyeball, and the upper lid sometimes has a crease somewhere in the middle of it. The lacrimal gland (tear duct) is generally slightly lower than the outer corner of

the eye. The upper and lower eyelids also have a fringe of eyelashes attached to them. The eyebrow is a fringe of hair that grows out of and along the brow bone, the bony ridge situated above the eye.



**FIGURE 13-10:**  
Drawing the nose  
in four steps.

Kensuke Okabayashi



SKETCHBOOK

Follow these steps to draw an eye:

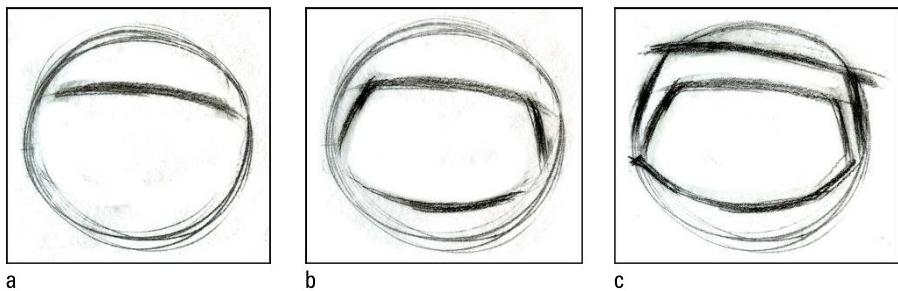
1. Use your 2H pencil to draw a rounded oval to indicate the position and size of one of your subject's eyeballs.
2. Use your 2H pencil to draw a line to represent the center of the upper lid at the top of the oval you drew in Step 1 (see Figure 13-11a).
3. With your 2H pencil, draw lines to represent the left and right of the upper lid that angle off to the inner and outer corners of the eye (see Figure 13-11b).
4. Use your 2H pencil to draw the lower lid (refer to Figure 13-11b).

The lower lid is more horizontal in the front because the swell of the eyeball pushes it forward. To the left and right of the center, the lower lid angles toward the corners of the eye. To draw the lower lid, simply draw the line that separates the lid from the eyeball. Be sure to look at the subject carefully while you draw because the curve of the line is different for every person. It's easier to get right if you draw the center part first and then the two sides.

**5. If your subject has a crease in their upper eyelid, use your 2H pencil to draw the crease (see Figure 13-11c).**

Notice how far above the opening of the eyelid you see the crease. Place your pencil where the middle of the crease needs to be on your paper; then look at the crease on your subject and draw the line.

**FIGURE 13-11:**  
Drawing the simple shapes that make up the eyeball and lids.



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**6. Use your 2H pencil to draw the basic shape of the iris (see Figure 13-12a).**

As you look at your subject, notice how much of the white of the eye is filled up by the iris and whether the iris touches the lower lid.

**7. Use your 2B pencil to draw the eyelashes (see Figure 13-12b).**

Don't try to draw every lash. Instead, draw the shapes you really see on your subject. For example, on the upper lid, you may notice that the fringe of lashes looks like a shape that roughly lines up with the curve of the lid. On the lower lid, you may see small wisps of lashes.

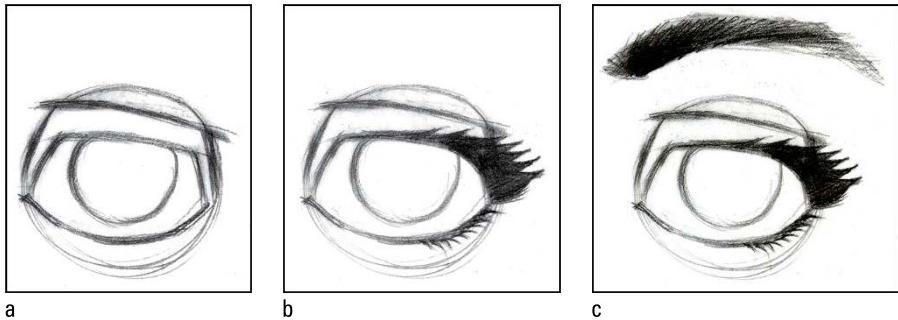
Notice that on both lids, the lashes don't go all the way to the inner corner of the eye. Focus on your subject as you draw the eyelashes and be sure to start and end them at the right places.

**8. Use your 2B pencil to draw the eyebrows (see Figure 13-12c).**

Notice that the top and bottom edges of the brow aren't defined by lines but that you get an impression of line because of the arrangement of the hairs of the eyebrow. Eyebrows look more realistic if you build them using hatching marks, which mimic the way hairs really grow (see Chapter 8 for more on hatching).

Make a mental note of how high and wide the eyebrows are. Notice where the eyebrows are thicker and where they are more sparse. If you need to thin the eyebrows, use your kneaded eraser to lift some of the hatching lines out. If you make the shape of the eyebrows too solid, your eyebrows may look unnatural. Be sensitive to what is actually there.

**FIGURE 13-12:**  
Drawing the iris,  
lashes, and  
eyebrows.



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## Put your money where your mouth is

To draw a realistic-looking mouth, you need to keep in mind the following points:

- » The mouth is made by a pair of lips stretched around the rounded volume of the head.
- » The lips are a continuation of the skin of the face.
- » The most important aspect of getting the mouth right is accurately drawing the line between the lips.



**SKETCHBOOK**

Follow these steps to practice drawing a mouth:

- 1. Use your 2H pencil to make three small marks to indicate the center and both corners of the line between the lips (see Figure 13-13a).**

The center of the line between the lips is generally one-third of the way between the root of the nose and the chin. To find the corners of the line, locate the position of each side between the corner of the nose and the side of the face. Notice whether the outer corners of the line between the lips sit higher or lower in relation to the center of the lips.

- 2. Use your 2H pencil to make a small contour line for the center of the line between the lips (see Figure 13-13b).**

Notice that you can see the line between the lips more clearly where the lips part and less clearly where they press together.

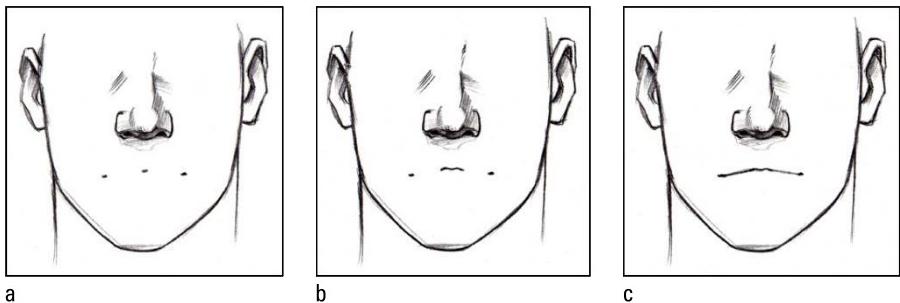
- 3. Use your 2H pencil to draw the left and right sides of the line between the lips (see Figure 13-13c).**

Begin each side of the line from the center and draw out toward the corner. Keep your eyes trained on the subject while you draw.

4. Use your 2B pencil and any shading method you prefer to lightly build shadows on the upper and lower lips and beneath the lower lip (see Figure 13-14a).

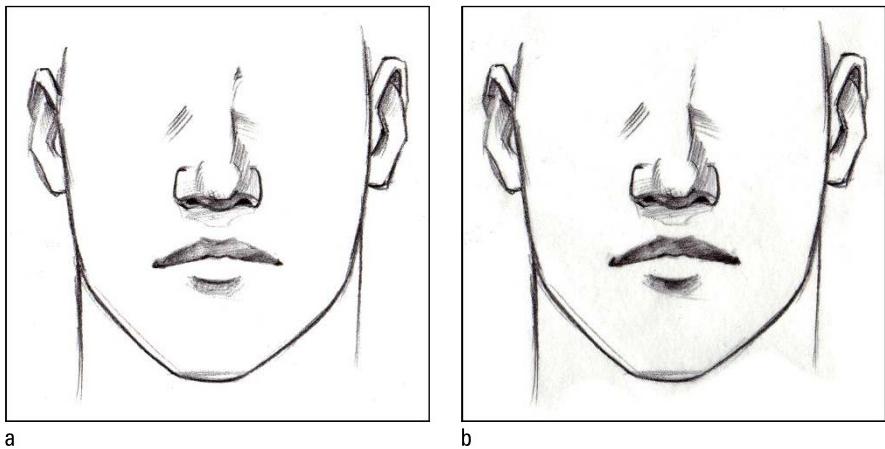
See Chapter 8 for info on the different shading techniques you can use.

5. Use your 4B pencil to build shading into areas of the lips where the values are darker (see Figure 13-14b).



**FIGURE 13-13:**  
Drawing the line  
of the lips in  
three stages.

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**FIGURE 13-14:**  
Using shadows to  
define the lips.

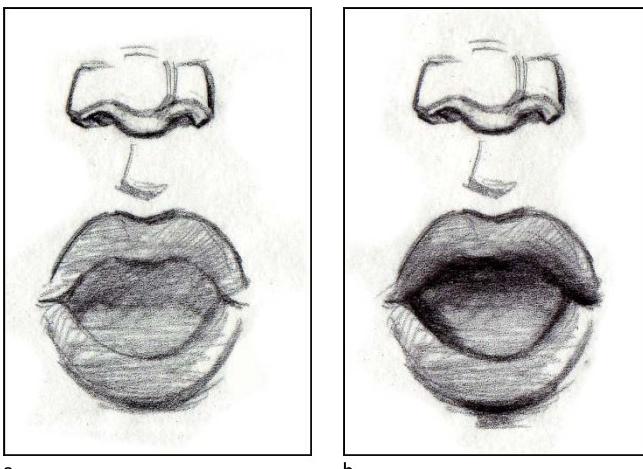
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TIP

When your subject's lips are parted, you can follow the same steps you use for closed lips, except you have to account for the opening of the mouth, too. To make the opening of the mouth realistic, draw the inner line of the top lip the same way you draw the line between the lips, beginning with the middle and working out to the corners. Then draw the line that defines the inside of the bottom lip. Use a 2B pencil to lightly shade the opening of the mouth (see Figure 13-15a).

Even if the opening of the mouth looks quite dark, keep the shading in the opening of the mouth somewhat transparent so that the opening of the mouth actually looks like an opening. If the shading is too solid, the opening of the mouth will look like a solid shape rather than an opening. Finally, look at the inner contours of each lip. If you see an area where the contours look darker than in other areas, use your 4B pencil to retrace them in the drawing (see Figure 13-15b).



**FIGURE 13-15:**  
Drawing  
parted lips.

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TIP

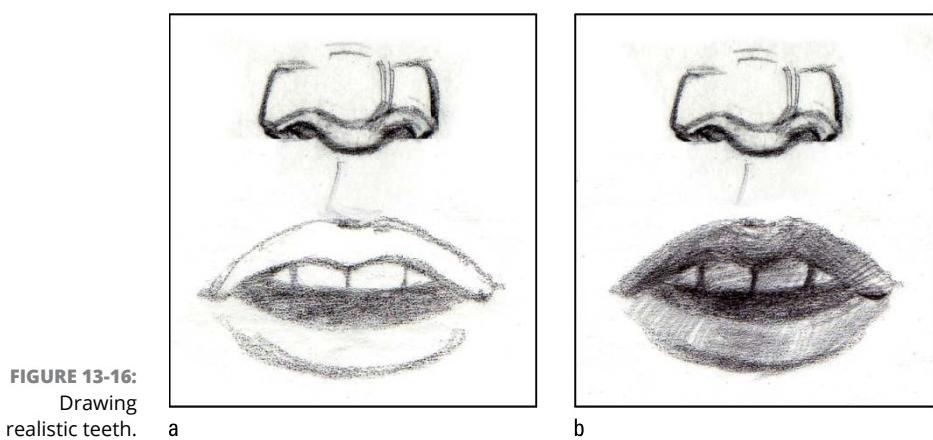
If you can see teeth in your subject's open mouth, you need to figure out how much of the opening of the mouth is actually taken up by teeth. Then follow the same directions you use for drawing an open mouth, except before you shade the opening of the mouth, use your 2H pencil to draw the simple shapes of the teeth you see (see Figure 13-16a). Use your kneaded eraser to lighten the lines around the teeth, and use your 2B pencil to shade the opening of the mouth. Then use shading to define the edges of the teeth. Finally, use a very sharp 2B pencil to draw marks between the teeth at any point where you see dark spaces (see Figure 13-16b).



REMEMBER

Any time you have to draw something you think you know well (like teeth), it is easy to fall back on the symbolic drawing learned in childhood. If you're trying really hard to get your drawing right and it just isn't happening, check to see if you are drawing what you think must be there instead of looking at what is actually there. In the case of teeth, ask yourself questions about them like, "How big are they compared to the lips? How big is one tooth compared to another? Do any of the teeth overlap?"

If you notice yourself drawing symbolically, just redirect your attention. Erase and start again. Paying attention to what is actually there takes practice, but learning what things are like by trying to draw them is one of the rewards of drawing.



**FIGURE 13-16:**  
Drawing  
realistic teeth.

a

b

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## All ears

Ears are made of intricate spirals of cartilage with some soft tissue around the edges. Like eyes, noses, and mouths, every ear has unique characteristics. Unless you're drawing a portrait in profile, the ears will always be somewhat foreshortened, if you can see them at all. In general, ears fall between the brow bone and the root of the nose. However, don't forget to look carefully at your subject because everyone's ears are different.

Unless you're making a drawing specifically about ears, keep them simple. You can suggest realistic ears without going into much detail. Because ears are small, you can't see a lot of detail from a typical viewing distance anyway.



SKETCHBOOK

Follow these steps to draw ears:

1. **Use your 2H pencil to draw the simple shape of each ear where it appears on your subject.**

Most of the time, this shape is something like a half-circle or oval.

2. **Break the shape of each ear into two or three sections based on the big divisions you see.**

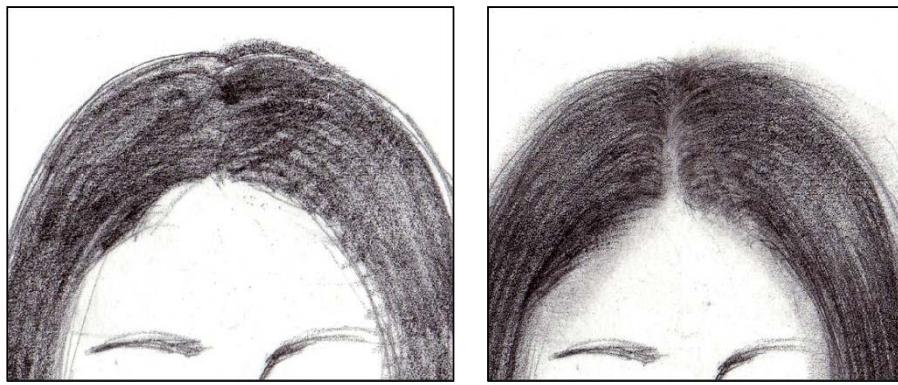
Look for shadows made by overlapping sections of cartilage and use any combination of lines and shading to represent the shadows. Usually, you can see one division near the top of the ear where the top of the ear curls over the interior. You may see a second division where a large piece of cartilage extends downward from the top half of the interior.

3. **Switch to a 2B pencil to add contour lines.**
4. **Use your kneaded eraser to clean up any stray lines and add or refine any shading to finish the drawing (refer to Figure 13-13c).**

## Drawing hair that actually appears to grow out of the head

Drawn hair looks realistic only when it appears to grow out of the head and has the texture of a soft, moveable mass. (For detailed information about creating hairlike textures, see Chapters 9 and 12.)

To draw hair that looks like it grows out of the head, you have to replicate what happens along the hairline. Figures 13-17a and 13-17b show what happens when you use an eraser to break the hairline in different spots and let the scalp break through the hair like it does in real life. Notice how much more convincing the hair looks in Figure 13-17b.



**FIGURE 13-17:**  
Comparing two  
renditions of the  
front view of hair.

b

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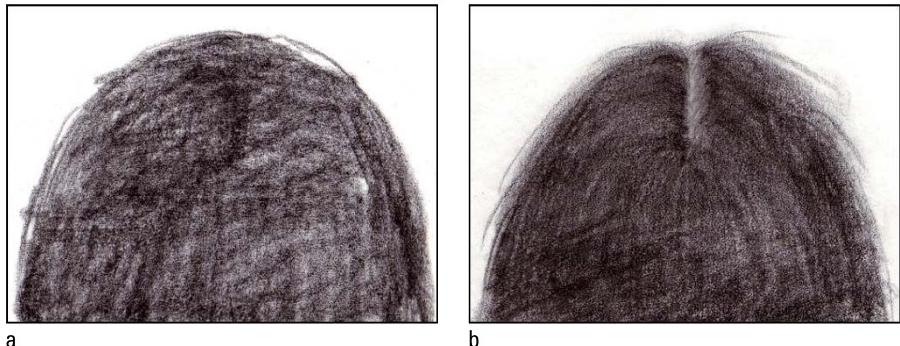
Figures 13-18a and 13-18b show a similar example except in these drawings, the view is from the back of the head and the artist uses the eraser to break the line along the part of the hair. Notice how much more realistic the hair is in Figure 13-18b.



To draw realistic hair, grab your sketchbook, kneaded eraser, and 2H, 2B, and 4H pencils and follow these steps. The first time you work through the steps, copy the drawings you see in this exercise; then find a friend to model for you or use a mirror to draw your own hair.

1. Use a 2H pencil to make hatching marks that describe the general direction and overall shape of the hair (see Figure 13-19a).

See Chapter 8 for more on the different shading techniques you can use to add volume and texture to drawings.

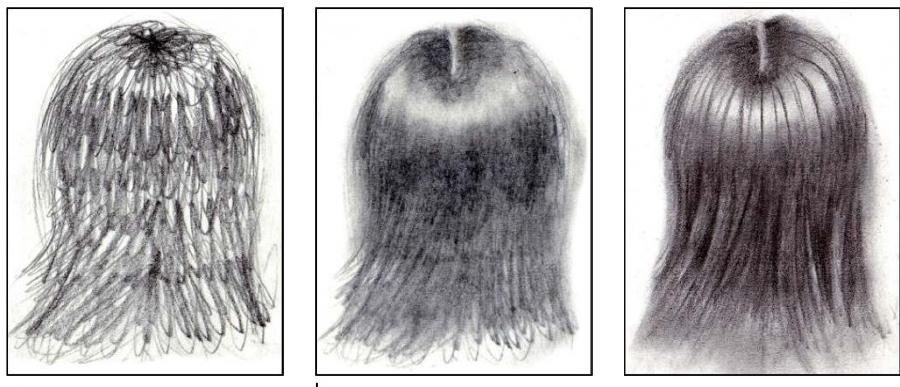


**FIGURE 13-18:**  
Comparing two  
renditions of the  
back view of hair.

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2. Use a kneaded eraser to lift out the lighter shapes in the hair and use your 2B pencil to build shading on the darker shapes (see Figure 13-19b).
3. Use a soft pencil, like a 4H, to add dark marks that separate sections of hair (see Figure 13-19c).

These marks represent shadows that occur when one section of the hair appears distinct from another.



**FIGURE 13-19:**  
Drawing realistic  
hair in three  
stages.

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## Drawing Far-Off Figures and People in Motion

To draw both far-off figures and people in motion, you have to look for essence rather than detail. In both cases, you add realism to your drawings by using less detail. After all, the only time you really see details on people in real life is when

they're fairly still and at a normal conversational distance from you. The farther someone is from you, the less you notice the details about them. Similarly, movement blurs your ability to perceive details, so the more someone moves, the less detail you see. Regardless of whether your subject is far away or in motion, what you notice about them are gesture, shape, size, and light and dark values rather than specific details.

In this section, you find strategies for showing distance or motion in your drawings. You practice making a drawing that incorporates both distant crowds of people and people in motion.

## Drawing people and crowds in the distance

To draw figures that seem to be in the distance, you need to incorporate the effects of *atmospheric perspective* into your drawing. Simply put, atmospheric perspective means that the farther an object recedes into the distance, the smaller and less distinct it looks. In other words, the figures you draw in the distance need to look like suggested forms rather than detailed people. Figure 13-20 shows an example of what I mean by suggested forms. (See the section on perspective in Chapter 7 for more information on atmospheric perspective.)

When people are in groups and/or crowds, the effect of atmospheric perspective is that the people in front look more distinct than the people farther back. However, if the whole group or crowd is meant to be in the distance, no one will be very distinct.



TIP

To help you get a handle on drawing groups of people, think of the crowd you're drawing as a mass rather than individuals. Draw the general shape of the mass first. Then you can add the necessary details to the people in the front of the crowd and the basic forms of the people in the back.



SKETCHBOOK

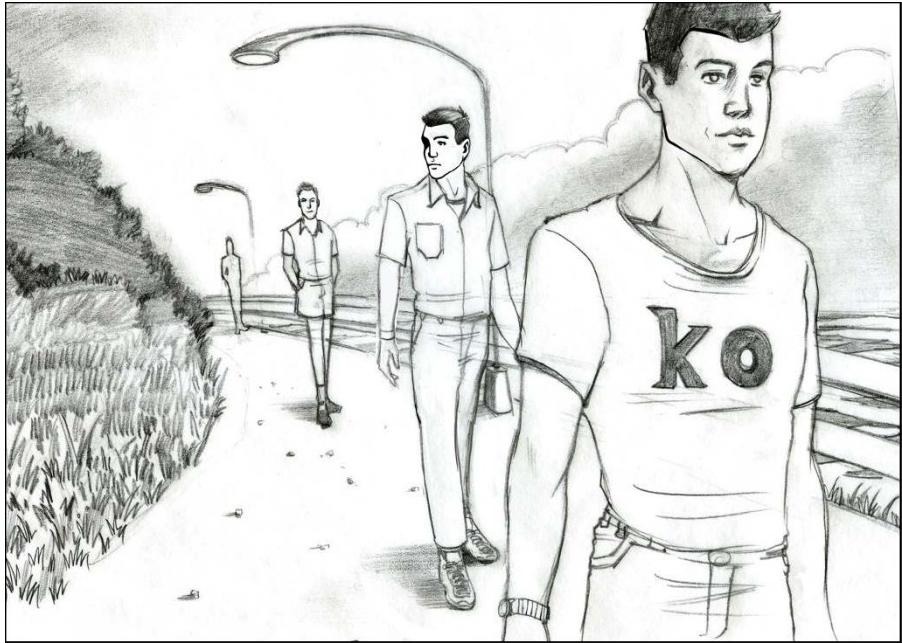
To see how atmospheric perspective comes into play when you're drawing realistic crowds or groups, grab your sketchbook, kneaded eraser, and 2H, 2B, and 4B pencils and follow these steps. As you work through the steps, copy the drawings you see here, or, if you have a photograph of a crowd, make your own drawing based on that photograph.

1. Use your 2H pencil to draw rounded shapes to indicate heads within the crowd (see Figure 13-21a).

Make the heads in the front slightly larger than the ones in the back.

2. Use your 2H pencil to draw the bodies of figures in the crowd (see Figure 13-21b).

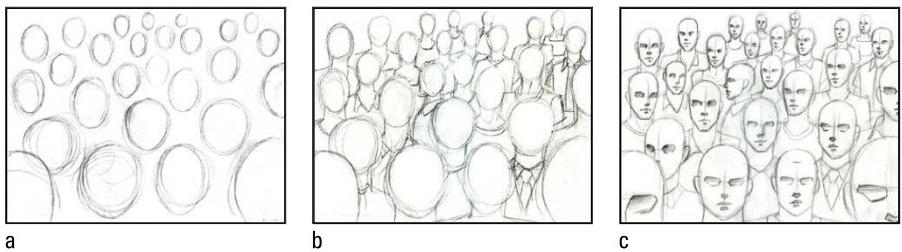
Begin with the figures in the front and keep the clothing simple.



**FIGURE 13-20:**  
Drawing convincing people in the distance by suggesting features rather than adding specific details.

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- 3. Lighten all your lines with a kneaded eraser.**
- 4. Switch to your 2B pencil and refine the contours of the heads and clothes of the figures in the front of the crowd.**  
Even though you're adding contour lines here, be sure to keep the lines light and don't add intricate detail.
- 5. Use your 4B pencil to draw lines to indicate the shadows that would be cast by lines of brows, noses, and mouths, but don't actually render the features (see Figure 13-21c).**



**FIGURE 13-21:**  
Drawing a crowd.

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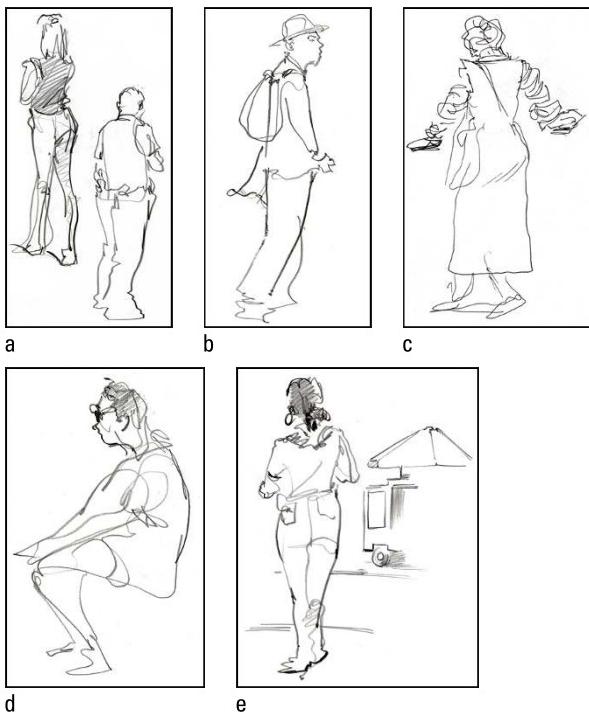
## Drawing figures in motion

Gesture drawing is a great way to capture the activity of figures in motion. In fact, the only chance you have at sketching figures in motion with any realism is to work quickly and fluidly, focusing only on the essence of the movement. Then, after you make the gesture drawing, you can worry about adding the details of your subject and its surroundings. (Check out the earlier section “Capturing gesture” for more information on making gesture drawings.)



TIP

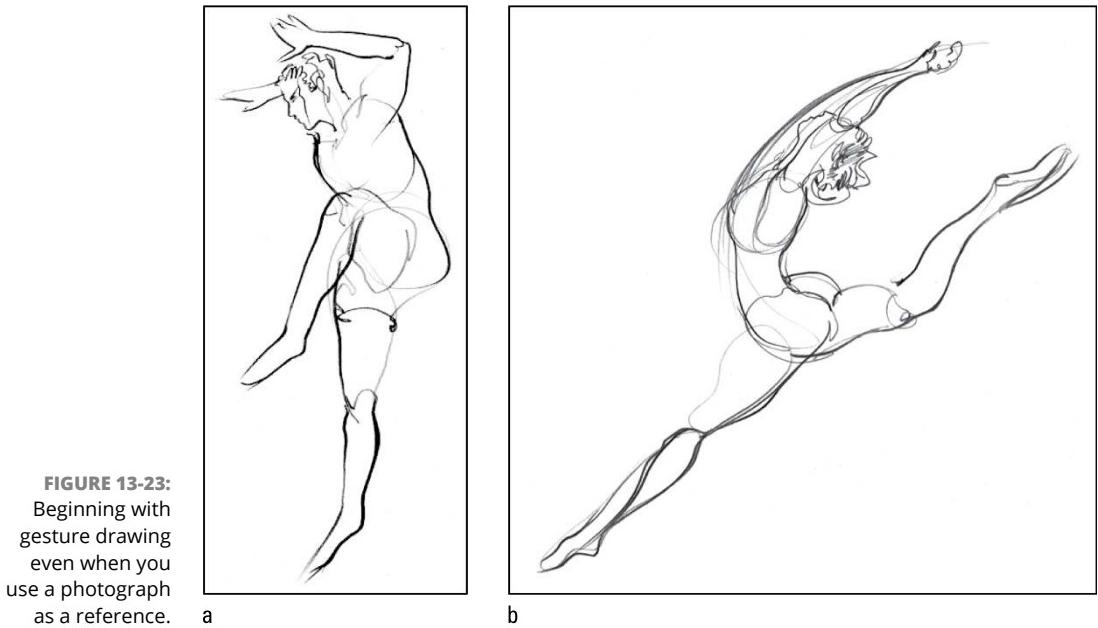
Your ability to draw believable motion depends on your understanding of what motion feels like. To get some practice with capturing motion on paper, take your sketchbook to a place where you can count on a lot of activity, perhaps a playground or a busy city street. Remind yourself that your subject is the motion and allow yourself the freedom to make what may look like a swirling, out-of-control mess. As long as you feel engaged with the movement you’re trying to draw, you’re doing it right. Figure 13-22 shows a few examples of gesture drawings of people standing, walking, and sitting. Notice that you can’t see details, but you definitely get a sense of what the people are doing and even how they may be feeling. For example, the people in Figure 13-22a are both standing with their backs to you, but the pose on the left conveys confidence while the one on the right looks timid.



**FIGURE 13-22:**  
Using gesture to  
capture figures in  
motion.

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Another way to make a drawing of figures in motion is to use a photograph as a reference. On the plus side, using a photographic reference allows you the luxury of seeing frozen motion and gives you the time to represent it on paper. On the minus side, copying frozen motion can lead to a drawing in which the action looks stilted. To prevent this stiffness, begin the drawing by making gesture drawings from objects in the photograph. The fast, free movements you make to capture the essence of the figures in the photograph give your drawing an energetic foundation. Figure 13-23 shows one figure jumping and the other leaping through the air.



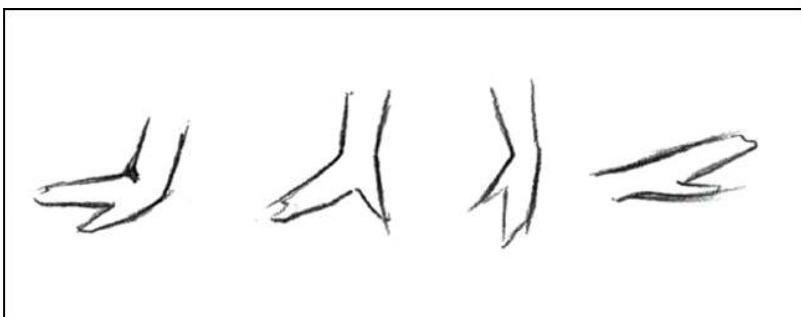
**FIGURE 13-23:**  
Beginning with  
gesture drawing  
even when you  
use a photograph  
as a reference.

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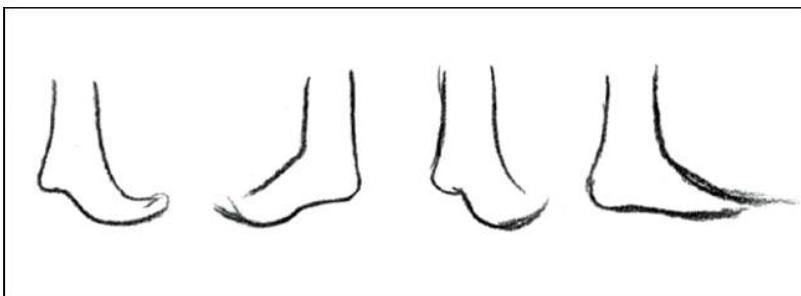


TIP

When you're drawing figures in motion, try to use a kind of shorthand to suggest the feet and hands. If you spend time rendering hands and feet in detail, your figure will look still even if the body is not. You can simplify hands by drawing a shape that fans out from the wrist in a direction that follows the motion of the arm. You can simplify feet by drawing the lines that would be the bottoms of the feet or the lines that separate the feet from the ground. Figure 13-24 shows some examples of shorthand, motion-inspired hands and feet.



a



b

**FIGURE 13-24:**  
Simplifying hands  
and feet to show  
motion.

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## Project: Crowd at the Finish Line



SKETCHBOOK

This project combines a crowd in the distance with figures in motion. To complete this project, you can either copy from the illustrations shown here or find a photograph of the finish line of a race to use for making a drawing based on the following steps. Whichever method you choose, grab your sketchbook, your 2H, 2B, and 4B pencils, and your kneaded and vinyl erasers and follow these steps:

1. **Use your 2H pencil to draw the simple shapes that make up the crowd, the runners, and the background (see Figure 13-25).**

Begin with a quick gesture drawing to place the figures and other objects in the drawing. Then build the people and objects using simple shapes.

2. **Use your kneaded eraser to lighten the lines you drew in Step 1.**
3. **Switch to your 2B pencil and use whatever shading technique you prefer to lightly build the simple value shapes that make up the figures and background (see Figure 13-26).**

The simple values at this stage should be all one value. See Chapter 8 for more on using shading techniques to add value.



**FIGURE 13-25:**  
Use gesture drawing to get a sense of placement and posture and then use simple shapes to build people and objects.

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**FIGURE 13-26:**  
Use a single value to block in all the shadows you see.

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4. Use your kneaded eraser to lighten any of the dark values that need to be lighter; then use your 2B pencil to build darker values into areas where the shadows look darker (see Figure 13-27).

Lightly add suggestions of facial features.



**FIGURE 13-27:**

Use your eraser to lighten values and a softer pencil to darken values where needed.

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5. Use your 2B pencil to slightly clarify the facial features, hands, and feet of the closest figures (see Figure 13-28).

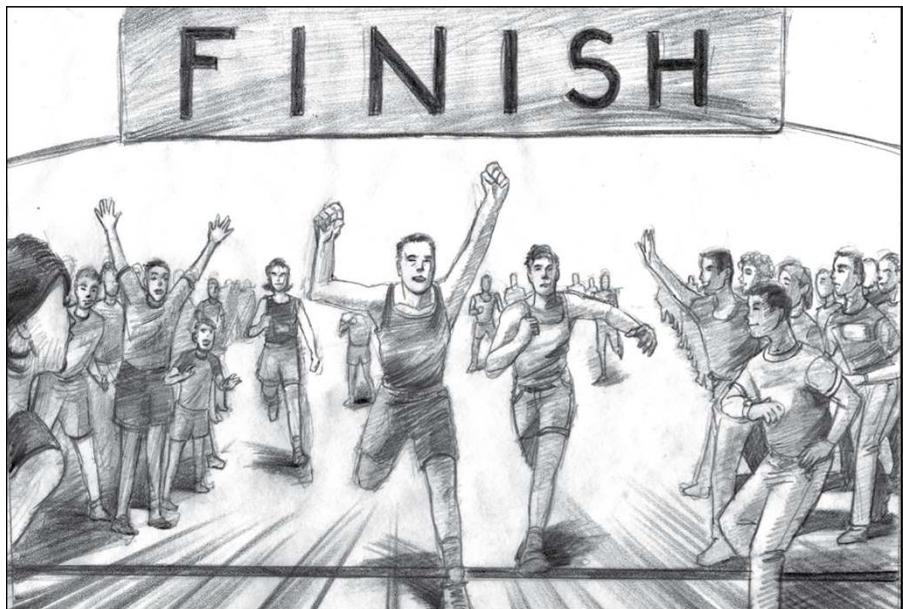
Instead of adding a lot of detail to all the figures in a distant drawing like this, you amplify the clarity of people and objects that are closest to you. Doing so increases the effect of atmospheric perspective, making the people in the back seem farther away because they're less clear. Even as you slightly clarify the facial features on the closest people, take care not to add too much detail. Instead, think of adding emphasis to the suggested features. For example, in Figure 13-28, the details on the faces of the nearest figures haven't changed much from those in Figure 13-27, but they're darker and made with crisper lines.

6. Switch to your 4B pencil and add the darkest darks where you need them (see Figure 13-29).



**FIGURE 13-28:**  
Use a softer  
pencil to  
give slightly  
more clarity to  
the people who  
are closest  
to the front.

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**FIGURE 13-29:**  
The finished  
drawing with the  
darkest values in  
place.

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# **The Part of Tens**

#### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Considering the process of drawing cartoons, including coming up with an idea, navigating influences, setting up your studio, and running with your idea through initial sketches. Refining your drawing and inking the finished drawing.

Navigating your growth as an artist, from studying art appreciation to experimenting with other media, looking inward to find yourself as an artist as well as taking advantage of opportunities to learn from others and share your work with the world.

Protecting your intellectual property with tips about what copyright law does and doesn't cover and how you can take advantage of its protections. Also learning when it's okay to copy from the works of others or incorporate copies of others' works into your own.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Getting your creative juices flowing
- » Creating the initial sketch and working out the details
- » Transforming your sketch into a finished cartoon

## Chapter **14**

# Ten Tips for Drawing Cartoons

**D**rawing cartoons is a fun and creative way to use your drawing skills. When you draw cartoons, you have a license to give form to anything you can imagine. So if you want to draw a tree conversing with a rock, go for it! Your cartoons can be silly, sweet, serious, or any tone you can imagine. You can use cartoons to tell jokes or stories or just to bring your unbelievable ideas to life. The sky's the limit when it comes to drawing cartoons, and this chapter is here to help guide you from idea to sketch to completed cartoon.

## Come Up with an Idea

You may not know exactly what you want to draw every time you get the urge to pick up your pencil and sketchbook. Sometimes ideas of what to draw come easily one right after another like colorful handkerchiefs from a clown's pocket. Other times, they may not be that easy to find, so whenever you get an idea for a drawing, be sure to write it down. Keep track of your ideas in a notebook and don't try to judge them when they come.



TIP

If you've hit a bit of an idea dry spell, try the following suggestions to jog your creativity:

- » **Think of an object and then imagine a characteristic you wouldn't ordinarily expect that object to have.** Draw it.
- » **Think of two things that don't have any relationship to each other and create a drawing of what would happen if you combined them.**
- » **Think of someone you know (or know of) and pick out a defining characteristic of that person.** How could you draw them so people would be able to see that character trait from just looking? (How does someone who is calm look? How about someone energetic, nervous, or kind?)
- » **Imagine that you can do something you'd never actually be able to do.** Consider how other people might react to your new ability or power. Draw a cartoon of this scenario.
- » **Imagine that you have a very loving, very large pet.** How would you react to the oversized pet? Draw a cartoon of how the pet changes your life.
- » **Imagine what you would do if you woke up one morning with six legs.** Draw a cartoon of what you'd look like and what you'd do with your extra limbs.
- » **Imagine what might happen if the government contacted you and asked you to do a dangerous job that only you could do.** Draw a cartoon of what the job might be and how you would respond.
- » **Imagine what would happen if the only way you could move around were on stilts, a pogo stick, or roller skates.** Draw a cartoon of that scenario.
- » **Think about where and when you would go if you and your family could be transported in time.** Create a cartoon of what you would wear, where you would go, and whom you would see.

## Embrace Your Influences without Losing Yourself

If you love the idea of drawing cartoons, graphic novels, serial comics, and more, you've likely been inspired by some other artists' work, and you may want to try out their styles and use them to make your own visual stories. Borrowing another artist's style not only helps give you direction as you learn, it's also a terrific way to develop your visual storytelling skills. To keep growing and discover your unique voice, think about what you love about the work you're emulating. Dissect it for character, narrative, and point of view. Think about why they made these decisions.



TIP

If you're trying to find your own voice:

- » **Embrace who you are now and stay open to the idea that your work will evolve as you grow.** Style happens on its own. Your style is the sum of the way you do things. It is always a work in progress.
- » **Spend some time every now and then drawing from life rather than your imagination.** Drawing from actual stuff is a great way to reinvigorate your imaginative drawings. In many communities you can find drop-in figure drawing sessions. Try searching the Internet to see if there is one near you. If not, you could always ask a friend to model for a drawing or get together with a group of friends to hire an artist's model for a few hours. Figure drawing is a great practice because it reminds you about the structure of the body and how it moves.
- » **Write or journal.** Journaling is good way to work through ideas. Writing out your thoughts can give you insights that help you figure out what you want to do next in your work.

## Make Decisions with Your Idea in Mind

So you have an idea . . . great! Now it's time to think about how you can turn that idea into action. All works of art, including cartoons, are made up of five compositional elements: lines, shapes, spaces, values, and color. Taken together, the compositional elements add up to the total form of an artwork. All works of art have form. They also have content. Content is what an artwork means. Meaning is tricky and subject to interpretation. If you have an idea (content) to convey, you can make choices about form to make your meaning clear. This list has suggestions for how you can bring form and content together in your work:

- » **Think about your idea and the overall story you want your cartoon to tell.** If it's a complex story that requires multiple scenes, create an outline. Develop your characters. Think about who they are and what they want.
- » **Consider the emotional/psychological tone of the story and of each scene and each character.** What kind of lines and shapes will help tell your story? If you want people to know a character is happy, what kind of lines and shapes could you use? What might a happy line look like? What might a sad line look like? Get your sketchbook out. Take the ideas you're developing and try making some lines and shapes that convey the mood of the ideas. (For more information about lines and shapes, check out Chapter 6.)

- » Sketch out your characters using what you learn from thinking about the lines and shapes you could use to show what the characters are like.

**Create a storyboard.** A storyboard is a plan. You make quick sketch of the composition for each frame in your story. Your storyboard might be one frame or enough frames to fill up a comic book. A storyboard is where you have a chance to tell your story through the way you arrange your characters and the elements of their setting. Arrangement is powerful. You can tell the viewer about the relationships between your characters just by the way you arrange them in the frame. (See Chapter 5 for more information on planning your drawings.)

Compositional tools like eye path and focal point to lead the eye of the viewer to the most important character or action in your cartoon. (See Part 2 for more details on incorporating different lines, shapes, spaces, values, and textures into your drawings and on using eye paths and other tools to convey your ideas.)

- » **Consider value.** You can use light and shadow to tell the viewer about time of day, place, mood. You can use them to call attention to a particular area. Sketch a value scheme into your storyboard. (Head to Chapter 8 to find information about value, including shading techniques.)
- » **If you're using color, come up with a color scheme.** Just like you did with line and shape, think about what colors make sense with the story you are trying to tell. For instance, your story will read differently if you use warm colors or cool colors. Even if you're not using color, color still plays a part. Using an achromatic palette (black, white, gray) is a choice about form and it impacts your story, too.



When you aren't sure how to draw something, think about your original idea and which choices best convey that idea.

REMEMBER

## Choose the Right Materials

It's a good idea to decide upfront which materials you'll use early in the drawing process versus which ones you'll use to finish your cartoon. The best materials to use when you're getting started give you maximum flexibility so that you can easily make changes. The best materials to use during the final stages perform in a reliable way every time you use them and give you maximum impact. (See Chapter 3 for more on what tools you need for any drawing.)



REMEMBER

Here are the best materials to use when you're starting your cartoon:

- » **Pencil:** Mechanical pencils offer the cleanest lines and are easy to erase. Any pencil will do. A harder pencil such as a 2H or 4H will erase easily and help keep your drawing cleaner than a softer pencil like a 4B or a 6B. (See Chapter 3 for more information about different grades of pencils.)
- » **Vinyl eraser and kneaded eraser:** When it comes to eliminating marks, vinyl erasers are more powerful than kneaded erasers. They're great for erasing any graphite you want to get rid of completely, whether you need to erase a large area of your drawing or just some stray marks. Kneaded erasers are gentler and more versatile. They're perfect for lightening lines you want to keep. To use a kneaded eraser, you can either rub the eraser across the paper to remove marks or press the eraser down on the paper and lift up to lighten marks.
- » **Ruler and plastic triangle:** A ruler is the ideal tool for drawing straight lines. But you can also combine a ruler with a plastic triangle to draw perfect 90-degree angles. Simply place one edge of the triangle up against one edge of the ruler; where they meet is a perfect 90-degree angle. This duo comes in handy when you're drawing buildings, windows, doors, and so on.
- » **Tracing paper and smooth drawing paper:** You can use any paper you have on hand. If you want to experiment with materials that make your job easier, try using marker paper for your cartoon drawings. The surface is very smooth and bleed-proof so it's great for markers. You can also try out illustration board and Bristol board. *Illustration board* is a smooth, lightweight cardboard. *Bristol board* is basically just a double-sided, textured paper; it comes in a variety of thicknesses. You can find these online or in a well-stocked art supply store. They're a little more expensive than standard drawing paper but can be worth the extra money.
- » **Digital tools:** Many cartoonists choose to make their drawings digitally. There are lots of benefits to this choice. At the top of the list are speed and flexibility. What could take hours with traditional media can be accomplished in a few clicks. For instance, because you can save multiple versions of a drawing you're working on, if it goes in a direction you don't like, you can go back to an earlier version in a snap. Digital tools allow you to test ideas for textures, colors, shadows, and so on, in a flash. You can even turn your drawings into multimedia animations. If you create something digitally, sharing it online is seamless. Technology for creating digital drawing is constantly improving and evolving. With a quick Internet search, you can find lots of information about free or inexpensive digital drawing applications.

Here are some materials to try when you're finishing your cartoon:

- » **Dip pens:** You dip these pens into ink to make your marks on paper. You can buy one or more interchangeable nibs of various shapes and sizes to fit your dip pens so that you can create interesting line variations.
- » **Brush pens:** These felt-tipped markers have flexible brush-shaped nibs that allow you to draw *calligraphic lines* (flowing lines with gradual, brush-like transitions between thickness and thinness). Like dip pens, brush pens are useful for inking drawings of any subjects that need a variety of line widths.
- » **Technical pens:** These pens make it easy to draw lines of precise, dependable widths. You want to have a range of widths (.005, .05, and so on) on hand so that you can control the width of the lines but still create lines of a variety of widths.
- » **Good-quality colored pencils:** You can find out about colored pencil brands online or ask someone at the art supply store to recommend a good brand. Although they're more expensive, the price is well worth the results they create. Cheaper colored pencils like the ones you used to fill in maps at elementary school don't begin to compare. You can purchase good colored pencils individually so that you don't have to pay a large sum of money to get started.

## Set Up a Place to Draw

Find a space in your home where you can sit comfortably and have easy access to all your drawing supplies. Try using a portable drawing board rather than a table as your drawing surface so that you can rotate the board while you work. (See Chapter 3 for more details on how to set up a drawing work space.) If you do use a drawing board, clip or tape your drawing paper to the surface you're working on so that it doesn't move around while you're drawing.



Make sure that you have good, consistent light around you so that you can see what you're drawing.

REMEMBER

## Sketch Your Idea

As soon as you have an idea, you can begin to sketch it out. Start with thumbnail-sized sketches. A thumbnail-sized sketch is generally an inch or two in height and width (thumb size). Small sketches like this allow you to work through several

ideas quickly so that you can look for the one that tells your story the most effectively. Thumbnail sketches give you a chance to work out the bugs in your composition before you commit them to a larger, more involved drawing.

Once you have a thumbnail sketch you like, use your 2H pencil to develop it into a full-sized sketch on your smooth drawing paper.

## Evaluate Your Sketch

To evaluate your completed sketch, consider your original cartoon idea. Try to decide whether or not other people will be able to get a sense of your intention from your sketch. Show the sketch to a trusted friend to get some feedback. Make any changes you think will help make your idea clearer.

## Plan Your Values

If you plan to shade your drawing, use some tracing paper to plan your values before you commit to them. Try out a few variations to give yourself several options. For example, you can try out different settings for your drawing by using mostly dark values in one tracing-paper plan to suggest nighttime and using mostly light values to suggest daytime in another plan. Then decide which one you think works best in your drawing. (See Chapter 8 for everything you need to know about shading and adding values to your drawings.)

## Clean Up Your Drawing

Before you add the final values, colors, and/or ink to your cartoon, spend some time cleaning up the drawing. Use your vinyl eraser to get rid of any lines you don't need and any smudges you see. Use your 2H pencil to firm up any lines that seem too tentative. Then tap all your lines with the kneaded eraser to remove excess graphite.

# Ink Your Work

Before you commit to ink, make sure that you're happy with your sketch and confident about the values you want to create. Wait until you're feeling calm to apply ink to your work. Inking your work just after you spill a pot of coffee may lead to jittery mistakes that you can't undo! Practice making your ink strokes on a separate piece of paper to get a feel for how wide of marks your pens make and for what happens when you lift the pen off the paper. When you're finished practicing, take your pen in hand and draw smoothly and confidently. Don't worry if you make a few mistakes; everyone makes them from time to time. You can always start over. As frustrating as starting over can be, each drawing you make increases your skills and your confidence.



TIP

When you're using ink to add shading to a drawing, you can use several different techniques, like hatching and cross-hatching, to make your drawing appear to have varying shades of gray, despite the fact that all your ink is one color. (Check out Chapter 8 for details about these different shading techniques. Although I describe and illustrate them using pencil, the basic ideas are the same for ink.)



TIP

Consider whether you want to add any color to your work. If you do, decide whether you want to use colored pencils, colored inks, watercolors, or another type of colored media. Some colored media, like watercolors and colored inks, work well with black ink; however, be sure to always experiment with combining different drawing media before you add them to your final drawing.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Appreciating different drawing styles and media
- » Developing creative individuality as an artist
- » Expanding your artistic journey and sharing your work with others

## Chapter **15**

# Ten Ways to Grow as an Artist

The 21st century is a great time to be an artist because every aesthetic avenue is open to you. Whether you like your art to be playful, serious, shocking, or anything in between, you can find your niche in today's art community. Just don't put too much pressure on yourself to decide what kind of artist you want to be. As you begin to develop preferences and become aware of your artistic tendencies, your artistic persona will emerge on its own. All you have to do is stay true to yourself, trust your instincts, and embrace change and growth when they come your way. Sounds simple enough, right?

No matter how successful you become, always try to find new ways to challenge yourself. The challenges you face in drawing are undoubtedly one of the main reasons why you keep coming back to your drawing table.

This chapter offers some great tips for how to find your way into the art world and how to keep growing as an artist once you get there.

# Step into Art Appreciation

If you're ready to start growing as an artist, I recommend beginning with the art of others. Yep, you heard us correctly — put down your drawing pencil and pick up your note-taking pencil. You can discover so much about yourself as an artist by studying the works of others, and thanks to museums, galleries, art books, and the Internet, you don't have to go far to find more than enough art to study. So take some time to examine and appreciate a diverse range of art and artists. Don't worry if you don't like everything you look at; appreciating art means finding out what it's about, not loving every piece you see.



TIP

Here are just a few ways to start appreciating art:

- » **Visit art museums and galleries so you can look at art in person.** Seeing art up close is a very different experience from seeing it in books or online. When viewing a work of art in person, you can see all the so-called imperfections that photography covers up; these imperfections offer proof that human hands created the work you're seeing. Take a sketchbook and pencil with you every time you visit a museum so that you can keep track of the artists you like and want to know more about.
- » **Watch your local newspapers and media for upcoming art exhibitions and plan to attend as many as possible.** You can usually meet and chat with artists in your community by attending the openings of these exhibitions. Don't be intimidated by their success. Take the opportunity to ask your fellow artists what inspires them or how they come up with the ideas behind their pieces. You may be surprised by how much you can learn about yourself just by talking to your peers.
- » **Get involved in a local art association.** You can learn as much from participating in a conversational circle as you can from viewing art itself. Just remember to keep an open mind and enjoy the diversity of creative concepts being explored by contemporary artists. Don't worry if you feel like the art appreciation group is speaking a foreign language the first few times you meet; you'll get the hang of it, and you have much to gain even if you just listen to everyone else talk.

# Experiment with Drawing Media

When you're first getting started with drawing, you may feel too overwhelmed by the new skills you're trying to master to think much about what drawing media you're using. Even in the beginning, though, it's a good idea to branch out and try

other drawing tools besides just pencils. You may love pencils, and that's perfectly fine, but you can learn a lot about drawing and about yourself simply by trying new drawing media. In time, your favorites will make themselves known to you, but even then, try to keep an open mind. Step away from what's comfortable every now and then — especially if you ever feel like you're stuck in a rut.

Here are some drawing media that can be really fun to work with but that I don't have time to cover fully in this book:

- » **Chalk pastels:** Pastels come in an infinite range of colors that you can layer and blend to create paint-like qualities of color and value. Check out *Pastels For Dummies* by Sherry Stone and Anita Giddings (Wiley) to find out a whole lot more about this colorful drawing medium.
- » **Charcoal:** This medium works great for sketching because it creates such rich, intense blacks. It also blends well — thanks to its soft texture — and is fairly easy to erase. But because charcoal is somewhat messy, easy to smudge, and slightly abrasive (in other words, not as smooth to draw with as graphite), you have to put in a little extra work to keep your drawings clean.

Charcoal comes in the following four main forms:

*Compressed charcoal* is rectangular or round, makes a very dark mark, and is the hardest form to control.

*Charcoal pencils* can be sharpened with a regular pencil sharpener, make very dark marks, and are the easiest form to control.

*Vine* or *willow charcoal* is shaped like a twig, is very crumbly, makes soft grays, and is the easiest form to erase.

*Powdered charcoal* is a fine powder that can be applied with a brush, cotton swab, or your fingers; it's excellent for toning surfaces to do subtractive drawing.

You can use water and a brush to make charcoal wash drawings. If you want to try this technique, make sure you use a paper that can stand up to water washes; watercolor paper is a great option.



TIP

- » **Colored pencils:** Colored pencils come in vast ranges of colors that you can purchase individually or in sets at art supply stores. You can optically mix different colors by layering them on top of one another. Colored pencils are difficult to erase, but they don't smudge easily and are very clean to work with.

To get unconventional effects with colored pencils, you can use a brush and odorless mineral spirits. If you want to try this technique, read all the health cautions on the mineral product and make sure you're in a well-ventilated area.



TIP

- » **Conté:** Conté (also called *conté crayon*) shares many of the same characteristics as charcoal, but, unlike charcoal, it comes in a wonderful range of earth tones. A basic set of conté includes black, a couple of grays and sepia (reddish browns), and white.
- » **Ink:** Today's drawing inks come in a wide range of colors. You can use various tools, including brushes and technical pens, to apply ink to paper; however, disposable pens and markers have become popular in recent decades and are much more convenient to use. A thin wash of ink provides gorgeous abstract backgrounds for drawings.
- » **Thread:** Embroidery has long been used to add beautiful embellishments to domestic objects and clothing. Today many artists embrace embroidery as a medium for drawing, too. You can use pencil to sketch your ideas on cloth and then use a needle to draw those ideas with any of the beautifully colored threads available at any craft or fabric store.

## Figure Out Who You Are as an Artist

Figuring out who you are as an artist is something you'll work on throughout your artistic life. Just like your sense of self as a person, your sense of self as an artist is always evolving. The added bonus of constantly asking yourself who you are as an artist is that the answer can help you address another ever-present question: What kind of artwork should you make?



TIP

Following are some ways to figure out who you are as an artist (see Chapter 2 for details on how you can start seeing as an artist):

- » **Pay attention to what you pay attention to.** Knowing what grabs your attention is key to understanding what you're interested in.
- » **Start collecting things that catch your eye.** Newspaper clippings, postcards, and photographs are good places to start. Set up a bulletin board so that you can display these items in the space where you do your creative work. At first, this process may seem self-indulgent, but it's a great habit to cultivate. Over time, you may notice patterns in the kinds of things you collect, which can help lead you to who you are (or want to be) as an artist.
- » **Keep a journal to record your thoughts about art.** Pay special attention to any shifts in thinking; these shifts can help you discover where you want to go next in your artistic life.

» **Post images of art you like online and try to generate thought-provoking discussions with your friends.** No matter what platform you prefer, creating an online forum is a great way to share your thoughts with others and hear what others have to say in return. Make a note to yourself about your responses to any discussions you have as a result; you may be surprised by what you learn about yourself as a person and as an artist.

## Investigate Different Drawing Styles



TECHNICAL STUFF

Some individuals try to fit all art into neatly labeled categories like the ones you see here:

- » *Abstract art* (sometimes called *nonrepresentational art*) focuses on form rather than specific visual references. In other words, it focuses on the elements of art, like lines, shapes, colors, values, and textures, and their arrangement on the drawing surface. Appreciating abstract art sometimes requires understanding and patience because it may not include any recognizable subjects.
- » *Impressionism* tends to be an impression of a subject rather than a depiction of the way it actually looks. Impressionistic drawings are often bold and vibrant and usually lack fine detail.
- » *Realism* (also known as *representational art*) is an approach to art whereby the artist intends to represent subject matter as it actually looks.
- » *Photorealism* is a style in which the drawings look more like photographs than drawings. Because cameras have only one lens for viewing the world (compared to the two eyes that human beings have), all photographs have some distortions no matter how realistic they appear. Photorealists faithfully re-create the effects of these distortions in their drawings and paintings.
- » *Surrealism* is a style in which artists let their imaginations do the driving. The objects in surreal drawings are usually recognizable but transformed by creative imagery. Some surrealist artists feel their images surface from their subconscious.

Although one or more of these drawing styles may seem to describe your current work more than the others, as with clothing, styles of art tend to go in and out of fashion. Instead of trying to fit into one of these labels, draw what you want and how you like; try to stay true to yourself, not an artistic label.



REMEMBER

To stay true to yourself, you need to do some introspective exploring to gain insight into your unique artistic strengths and preferences. Although you (and your work) are always changing, your personal artistic identity emerges based on the following:

- » The subjects you find most appealing and love to draw
- » Your unique way of viewing the world around you
- » The styles of drawings you prefer
- » The drawing techniques you enjoy and the media you use
- » Your acceptance of the challenge to ignore trends if they don't suit you
- » Your personal needs to communicate through your art
- » Your unique storehouse of life experiences and personal values



TIP

Your style continues to evolve for as long as you draw. Maintain your sketchbook and save some of your drawings. Reflecting on your personal journey is an important part of your continued growth as an artist.

## Work from Life and Photographs

Drawing from direct observation is an invaluable experience. It's the best way to study (and figure out how to represent) the way light and shadows play across three-dimensional forms. However, working from life isn't always an option. Imagine, for example, that you want to draw a circus. Although you can't really set up and draw from life at the circus, don't just abandon your idea! Instead, turn to the next best thing to real life — photographs. Use a photograph (or a series of photographs) of a circus and draw from what you see in it.



TIP

Whenever you're going to a place where you'd love to sketch but you know doing so is impractical, tuck your camera into your bag. That way, you're ready when you see something you'd love to draw!



WARNING

Although photographs offer a great alternative to real life, you need to be aware of a few special problems associated with them:

- » **The camera looks at the world with a single lens; it can't replicate the depth you see with your eyes.** If you're faithful to a photograph, the image you create will be somewhat flat.

» **Photographs and copyright issues often go hand in hand.** For example, if you find a great photograph in a magazine and make a drawing from it, you may be unwittingly committing plagiarism. (See Chapter 16 for more information about copyright issues and how to avoid them.)



REMEMBER

It's perfectly safe to draw from your own photographs, photographs given to you by friends or family, and very old photographs. And you can certainly draw from famous photographs published in magazines and other sources as long as you do so to develop your drawing skills and you don't take credit for creating the image.

## Attend Art Classes, Lessons, and Workshops

You can always benefit from attending drawing classes and workshops. Not only do you meet others like you who are looking to improve their drawing skills, but you also expose yourself to novel techniques and drawing styles. This exposure can help you further develop your own style and maybe even branch out to something entirely new.



TIP

If you can find one, try to attend a life-drawing class. This type of class offers the highly rewarding opportunity to draw from live human models, which can really help you develop your drawing skills. Before you go to such a class, check out Chapter 13 for everything you need to know about drawing people.

As you uncover local art resources, you meet other artists and have opportunities to become involved in art groups. Many art groups organize inexpensive figure-drawing sessions, workshops, and even informal critiques. Check out your local community-based educational facilities and recreational centers for art programs in your area.



TIP

You can find lots of drawing help on the Internet. In fact, you're never more than a search engine query away from a world of drawing information and advice. Dig deep and you'll discover there are many interpretations of the "right" way to do just about anything. You may start to wonder who to believe. The good news is, there really are a lot of "right" ways to do most things. The trick is finding one that feels right to you and try it. Then try some of the other ideas, too.

## Give Painting a Try

If you're thinking about taking up painting, stop thinking and do it! Although having drawing skills can help you develop painting skills, you don't have to be able to draw well to begin to learn to paint. Because painting reinforces the habit of comparing relationships of shape, size, and value, you'll probably find that taking up painting actually strengthens your drawing skills.



TIP

Because painting takes a lot of specialty equipment and is easiest to learn with the guidance of an experienced teacher, look for a community class or summer workshop. And if you're interested in a specific type of painting, consider checking out one of the following titles (all published by Wiley):

- » *Acrylic Painting For Dummies* by Colette Pitcher
- » *Oil Painting For Dummies* by Anita Giddings and Sherry Stone Clifton
- » *Watercolor Painting For Dummies* by Colette Pitcher

## Ignite Your Sparks of Creativity

Trust your ideas. No one looks at the world exactly the way you do. Keep a sketchbook with you so that you can jot down ideas for drawing the moment you have them.

Refill your creative well. When ideas don't come to you naturally, don't try to force them; you'll only frustrate yourself. Instead of focusing on yourself, look outward at things like books, movies, music, walks, and conversations with friends. You may be surprised by how much spontaneous inspiration you'll find when you're not forcing it!

## Put Your Drawings on the Internet

If you're ready to start sharing your drawing skills with friends, family, and others (and receiving feedback from them), you have many free or inexpensive options to choose from online. Depending on your preferences, you can usually opt to share them privately or publicly.



REMEMBER

Although showing your work to others can be scary, especially if doing so is new for you, it's an important and exciting part of being an artist. All the feedback you get, even the negative stuff, is helpful if you embrace it the right way. Because you know your work from your own point of view, other people can often point out things you may not see. You don't have to agree with everything your viewers say, but knowing how others respond to your work is important to your development as an artist.

## Look for Other Ways to Get Your Work Out There

So, you've been drawing for a little while now and you'd like to do something with the pile of artwork that's accumulating? Well, maybe it's time to think about exhibiting your work in a show. By displaying your work for others to see, you create an opportunity to see how people respond to your work.

Local galleries can be intimidating when you're first starting out, but don't worry. They aren't the only place in town to exhibit your work. Many restaurants and coffee houses love to exhibit work by local artists. Look around your town for venues that display original art made locally. Check with the venues' staff to find out about their submission policies.

Many towns have cooperative galleries, which are typically run by members who pay regular dues. In exchange for dues and possibly volunteer work, members have the privilege of showing artwork. At some cooperative galleries, you can display your work all the time. At others, you may be invited to take part in periodic group and/or solo shows. Research the galleries in your town to find out whether any of them are cooperative.



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding what copyright is and what it means for you as an artist
- » Determining what makes a work original and copyrightable
- » Figuring out how to claim copyright on your work and knowing when you can't

## Chapter 16

# Answering Ten Common Copyright Questions

All artists — yes, I mean you, too — need to understand and respect the laws of copyright as they pertain to art. To help you understand what copyright is and what it means for you as an artist, I dedicate this chapter to answering ten common copyright-related questions.

**Note:** These answers are meant only as a guide. To be sure you're handling copyright issues legally, consult the U.S. Copyright Office or a lawyer who specializes in copyright law. If you live outside the United States, find a similar government office in your country.



TIP

In some cases, copyright laws depend on where you live and work in the world. If you have any questions about copyright issues regarding your work, consult a lawyer who is familiar with the laws in your specific region.

# What Is Copyright?

The U.S. Copyright Office says that *copyright* is a form of protection that grants artists the exclusive right to sell, reproduce, exhibit, and make derivative works from their original drawings or other creative works. The original artist is the sole owner of the copyright to their work.

What copyright means for you as an artist is that you get to control what happens to your drawings or other creative work after you make them. For example, if you upload an image of a drawing you created to the Internet, your copyright makes it illegal for someone else to use your drawing as a T-shirt design, greeting card, or anything else without first obtaining your permission.

## What Kinds of Works Are Protected by Copyright?

You can copyright any original drawing or other creative work that you make. According to the U.S. Copyright Office, “Copyright law protects original works of authorship.” *Original* means wholly new. So if you copy the work of another, whether in whole or in part, the work you create isn’t considered original, no matter how much you change or add to the copied work — which means you can’t copyright it. *Authorship* is the fact of having created something. A work of authorship is any original, creative product, whether it’s a book, computer program, sculpture, drawing, or any other creative work. When you create an original drawing, you’re the author of that drawing, according to copyright law.



REMEMBER

U.S. copyright law states that copyright doesn’t protect ideas; however, it may protect the way ideas are expressed. For example, *ideas* — such as love, loss, and growth — are impossible for anyone to own, but the *way* ideas are expressed — the artistic form through which artists represent ideas — can be original and, as such, can be copyrighted.

## When Is an Artwork Not an Original?

An artwork is not original when the art is copied from an idea or image that is copyrighted by someone else. So if you base your drawings on cartoon characters or artworks by other artists, pictures in books, or on the Internet, or photographs

taken by someone else, you can't claim copyright for your works because they aren't considered original.



REMEMBER

It's okay to copy from the copyrighted works of other artists as long as you either get permission from the original artist or you do so only for research and learning purposes. Although you can't claim your reproductions of other artists' work as your original drawings, copying from other artists is a great way to improve your drawing skills. (See the next section on drawing from copyrighted images for more details.)

## Can I Draw from Copyrighted Images?

You can draw from a copyrighted image if you have the permission of the person who owns the copyright (in most cases, this is the person who conceptualized and physically created the original work) or if the reason that you want to copy the image is covered in the fair use doctrine of U.S. copyright law. According to the U.S. Copyright Office, the fair use doctrine (section 107 of U.S. copyright law) "contains a list of the various purposes for which the reproduction of a particular work may be considered fair, such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research."



REMEMBER

If you want to copy from a copyrighted work for the purpose of research, don't expect to present your copy as an original work or to use it for any other purpose because doing so would be illegal. If you have any doubts about whether your purpose for copying an original work is covered by the fair use doctrine, consult a copyright lawyer.

## If I Make Changes to a Copyrighted Image, Can I Make It My Own?



WARNING

Making changes to a copyrighted image does not make that work your own. You may hear that you can draw from a copyrighted image, change 10 percent of the image, and copyright the work as your own, but, according to the U.S. Copyright Office, you can't.

# Can I Draw from the Illustrations in This Book?

This book is designed to help you use the illustrations featured in it as tools for developing your drawing skills. I straight-up tell you to copy from the illustrations! However, you can't claim copyright to any of the drawings you create based on the illustrations or images you see in this book. Doing so would be considered plagiarism.



TECHNICAL STUFF

*Plagiarism* is attempting to take credit for someone else's original artwork or other creative work. According to the U.S. Copyright Office, if someone plagiarizes someone else's copyrighted artwork, the owner of the copyrighted work may be able to sue for damages. Fortunately, you can easily avoid plagiarism! Just be sure you don't present reproductions of anyone else's copyrighted artwork as your own.

## How Do I Claim Copyright to My Original Art?

If you live in a country that has signed the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property (often just called the Berne Convention), the act of claiming copyright is simple. From the moment your art is completed, you automatically own the copyright. Just a few of the countries that have signed the Berne Convention include Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

If you're curious about whether your country has signed this convention, just type *Berne Convention signatories* into your favorite search engine. If your country hasn't signed the Berne Convention, your country may have alternative copyright regulations in place. To find out if it does, do some research to determine whether your government has an office of copyright law. If you can't find an office of copyright law, check with your local library.



WARNING

Just because you claim copyright doesn't mean you can legally prove you own your copyright. To find out how to obtain legal proof of copyright, check out the next section.

# How Can I Prove That I Own Copyright?

In the United States, the only official way to prove you own your copyright is to register your work with the U.S. Copyright Office. Why would you need to prove you own copyright to your work? The U.S. Copyright Office says that in order to bring an infringement lawsuit, you must have registered your original artwork with the Copyright Office. (An *infringement* is a violation; a copyright infringement is any violation of copyright law.)

To find out how to register your work, check out the website [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov). You have to pay a fee to register your works, but it may be worth the peace of mind you get from knowing your work is protected.



WARNING

You may have heard of an old method for guaranteeing ownership of a work of art that involved simply mailing a copy of the work to yourself. Although this strategy may help you win an argument among friends, according to U.S. copyright law, it won't hold up in court.

## Can I Put a Copyright © Symbol on My Original Art?

As long as you're the original creator of an artwork, you have the right to put the copyright symbol on it. Your work doesn't have to be officially registered with the U.S. Copyright Office for you to use the copyright symbol.

## How Do I Use the Copyright © Symbol?

A legitimate statement of copyright needs the following three elements:

- » The copyright symbol
- » The year the artwork was created
- » The name of the artist

Here's an example: **Copyright © 2023, Joanne Artist.** You can put this information anywhere on your drawing, but the ideal spot for it is one that's clearly visible but that doesn't distract the viewer from looking at the artwork.



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## About the Author

Jamie Platt (formerly Combs) is an artist living and working in Kansas City, Missouri. She earned a BFA in painting from Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and an MFA in painting from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. She has taught numerous courses in drawing, painting, color theory, and design at institutions including the Smithsonian Resident Associates Program, in Washington, DC, the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, Indiana, DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, and Ivy Tech Community College in Bloomington, Indiana. Currently Jamie is the director of the Gallery of Art & Design in the University of Central Missouri. Jamie's work as an artist and teacher is heavily informed by her training in and love for drawing.

## Dedication

To Aaron with love. Thank you for the constant support. —JP

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